Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Green Fund

Nov. 4/78

A

BX 5200 .H49 1825 v.4
Heywood, Oliver, 1629-1702.
The whole works of the Rev.
Oliver Heywood

Shelf.....

Mary Sutcliffe
1836

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Oliver Heywood to the Rev. Thomas Jollie

Reverend and dear Brother June 12. 1700

Your letter by your maid I received yesterday, am glad to hear from you, but sorry for your bodily infirmity & shall desire to sympathize with you, god will gradually wean us from and wrap us out of the world that heaven may be more welcom, that cool which drains, or that love which draws us to god, makes us meet for heaven I am heartily sorry for that unhappy reaction amongst our friends in Cheshire, a sad sentiment upon the 2d of James — to have a mind calesthenic like that, with the like in some other places, bodes ill to the nation, and one liberty and if my ink, pl breath, or blood would afford a plaistre, I should rejoyce for they have been and are dear to me, but what can man do? I am very jealous that MC K hath missed it various ways, and he must either seriously repent and solemnly declare in a publick professed way or he cannot expect that either god or man will be reconciled to him. sin will bring shame and shaming our selves is the first fruit of it. I purpose if the Lord will to write home to him, to which I have some peculiar obligations: I'm glad you have so far concern'd your self in this affair, and have been to skill to him and them, and that he shows any relentings but that's not enough them that sin, rebuke before all I fear so especially preaching and I think a time of probation of the truth of Repentance may be fit: I am troubled for his prejudices ag^t you and silence to your letters: I am far from palliating, extenuating or excusing any ones faults, nigra in lacteis unq sunt in clarissis Elasphemia yet its frequently observed that when men begin to draw for Archclog they oft run too far, make worst constructions of well meant actions, aggravate things to the highest, new prejudices are raised fomented, several will bring stores out of ill natured, corner to perpetuate dissentions: I wish three had been more caution and moderation used by our christian brethren, had they acquainted with some of us at first before matters came to this head and height who knows but much scandall had been prevented and yet for all this if both sides would lay aside pillorius, and quietly state their case, methinks something might be done by the ministers of Christ at a distance, for I must confesse I am not capable of reaching them or conversing personally with them, nor is it fit for them to come, but some proposals of generall termes of accommodation subscribed by 3 or 4 of us, and presented to them might make an experiment, how far that may goe before three by a twofold knight- errant, for I should be every be shilling but should be a true prophet to prophesy, let the dissenters alone and they will destroy themselves goods way years, let the dissenters alone and they will destroy themselves goods way hath its authority as much as their Apocalyptical comets: you that have more opportunity to help them, and the deference they have for your person, gift, gravity, age and graces, is as likely to put an End to the matter as any I know, and I shall contribute the best assistance that lyes within my power, if you or they shall signify what preacher is made thereby, and methinks there seems some necessity of three meeting, upon overall considerations, but I cannot enlarge, nor more I must make it matter of my poor prayers, that they may walk in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the holy ghost may be enjoyed — Dear Brother, we have not many steps to our Fathers house: wherefore one another, one confess shall unanimously sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, with one godly friends and brethren now at best — where he longs to be who is

Accept this little token as a friend — your redeemed ancyently obliged brother O. Heywood

Sec. 6 307 Vol. IV

To Sir J. Pettus Bart. Rev. Oliver Heywood to the Rev. Thomas Jollie

storys out of [illegible] Rev. Oliver Heywood to the Rev. Thomas Jollie
more caution and moderation used by our christian brethren, had they
advised with some of us at first before matters came to this head and height
who knows but much scandall had been prevented and yet for all this
if both sides would lay aside billerus, and quietly state their case, methinks
something might be done by the ministers of Christ at a distance, for I
must confesse I am not capable of reaching them or conversing personally
with them, nor is it fit for them to come, but some proposals of generall
termes of accommadation subscribed by 3 or 4 of us, and presented to them
might make an experiment, how far that may goe before there be a totall
rupture, for I should be sorry Dr Stillingfleet should be a true prophet 20
years, let the dissenters alone and they will destroy themselves gods way
hath its authority as much as their Apocalypticall courts - you that
live nearer may have fairer opportunity to help them, and the deference
they have for your person, gift, gravity, age and graces, is as likely to put
an End to the matter as any I know, and I shall contribute the best
assistance that lyes within my power, if you or they shall signify what
procedure is made therein, and methinks there seemes some necessity of their
reuniting, upon severall considerations. but I cannot inlarge, however
I must make it matter of my poor prayers that the god of all grace
would humble and soften their hearts, that they may walk in the fear
of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy ghost may be edifyed — Dear Brother,
we have not many steps to our fathers house where our sonles shall unanimously
sing the song of Moses and the lamb, with our godly friends and brethren, now
at best - where he longs to be who is
Accept this little treatise as a viand -
your endeared anciently obliged
brother
O. Heywood

THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. OLIVER HEYWOOD, B. A.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED, REVISED, AND ARRANGED,

Including some Tracts extremely scarce, and others from unpublished Manuscripts :

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FOURTH,

CONTAINING

BAPTISMAL BONDS.
A FAMILY ALTAR.
THE BEST ENTAIL.
HEAVENLY CONVERSE.

IDLE:

PRINTED BY JOHN VINT,

FOR THE EDITOR; F. WESTLEY, STATIONERS' COURT; B. J. HOLDSWORTH, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD; R. BAYNES, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON; AND D. BROWN, ST. ANDREW'S STREET, EDINBURGH.

1826.

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

CONTENTS

OF

THE FOURTH VOLUME.

BAPTISMAL BONDS.

		Page.
The Epistle to the Reader		ix
CHAP. I.	Introduction	1
II.	To ascertain what sacrifices have been prescribed and accepted when men have made a covenant with God	22
III.	What is covenanting in general? and what is this personal covenanting?	38
IV.	Instances of this practice of personal covenanting, and reasons for it.	48
V.	Arguments produced for confirmation of the doctrine	63
VI.	What is an essentially necessary preparation for entering into personal covenant with God	86
VII.	Circumstances which should form an inducement to enter into a covenant engagement with God, and which are favourable to the design	107
VIII.	The matter or form of words a person may employ in his entering into a personal covenant with the Lord	131
IX.	The form of a person's dedicating himself and all that he hath to the Lord	156

Page.

X. Several objections against this course of entering into a covenant engagement with God, briefly answered - - - - - - 172

XI. The duties required of those who have been personally forming a covenant engagement with God - - - - - - - 184

XII. Address to persons of different descriptions commencing with unconverted sinners 205

XIII. Counsel and instructions given to sinners that they may enter into a personal engagement to be the Lord's - - - - - 223

XIV. Admonition and consolation for those who have formed a covenant engagement - - 239

XV. Sources of consolation suggested, and a solution of doubts proposed - - - - - 250

POSTSCRIPT. Introduction—acceptance of God—dedication to him of—soul—body—connections —and circumstances - - - - - 277

A FAMILY ALTAR.

The Epistle to the Christian Reader - - - - - - 285

Recommendatory Epistle - - - - - - - - - 289

CHAP. I. Explanation of the text - - - - - 293

II. Statement of what is meant by family altars, and what is required of householders - - 305

III. Arguments to prove that governors of families should set up altars for the worship of God - - - - - - - - - 312

IV. Objections militating against family altars proposed and answered - - - - - 328

V. Neglect of family worship, an evil of a threatening description and greatly to be lamented 344

VI. Motives to influence masters of families to set up altars to God for his solemn worship - 357

VII. Directions for setting up an altar in families, and for the management of family worship - 367

Page.

VIII. Directions for carrying on the worship of God in families, as to the matter of prayer - 376
IX. The manner of performing family worship considered - - - - - - - 390
X. A solution of several cases of conscience concerning the worship of God in families - 402

THE BEST ENTAIL.

Dedication - - - - - - - - - - 421
The Preface - - - - - - - - - - 424
CHAP. I. Introductory observations - - - - 429
II. The sins and sufferings of families often occasion the grief of parents - - - - - 435
III. Nature of the covenant of grace, and what there is in it to support the Christian - - - 441
IV. Sources of hope which parents derive from the covenant for their adult and surviving children - - - - - - - - 448
V. Answer to an objection against the premises - 461
VI. The subject calculated to produce conviction and humiliation - - - - - 468
VII. Instruction may be derived from the subject under consideration - - - - - 477

HEAVENLY CONVERSE.

The Preface - - - - - - - - - 507
Heavenly Converse, Introduction - - - - - 513
Asserted and proved - - - - 522
Inferences - - - - - - 545

Letter to the Rev. T. Jollie, prefixed to this Volume as the Fac-simile of an Autograph in the possession of the Rev. T. Raffles, LL.D. - - - - - - 567

BAPTISMAL BONDS

RENEWED.

THE

EPISTLE

TO

THE READER.

TO ALL CHRISTIANS WHO HOPE AND DESIRE TO STAND FIRM, UNDER THEIR BAPTISMAL OBLIGATIONS, TO THE END,—GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE, FROM GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

IT is the transcendent design of infinite grace, to restore fallen man. All the persons of the sacred Trinity perform their peculiar parts in this blessed undertaking; and a line of love runs through the whole transaction. God the Father humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and on the earth; God the Son took the form of a servant, and became obedient even to death; God the Holy Ghost as the gentle wind, that bloweth where it listeth, breathes spiritual life into dead souls, and fits them for heaven.* What is this insignificant creature called man, that God should thus concern himself for him? he was not at such charges for the fallen angels, there was no stop in their fall from the highest heavens to the lowest dungeon of hell. But God remembered man in his low estate, "because his mercy endureth for ever." The flaming sword in the hand of the cherubim, is turned into a pastoral staff in the hand of the angel of the covenant,

* Psalm cxiii. 6. Phil. ii. 7, 8. John iii. 8.

the guard to prevent entrance, is a guard to secure the enterers; the bloody path is turned into a milky way; the old death-producing course is turned into a new and living way; a causey is raised up, a blessed bridge, whose foundation is the corner-stone which the builders refused, to carry the traveller to Zion over the gulf of God's wrath; yea, a chariot is paved with love to convey the daughters of Jerusalem swiftly, safely and easily to heaven. The veil of Christ's humanity being rent, the veil of the temple is rent, so that poor Gentiles that stand afar off in the outer court, may look upon and enter into the holiest of all, and be kindly entertained in the presence chamber.* It is God's kindness and Christ's office to reveal this method of salvation to the sons of men. The sealed book, yea, the temple of God is opened in heaven, gospel grace is tendered, sinners are invited to lay hold on this life, but all would be in vain except the Holy Ghost should make a particular application of all that rich grace which was in the heart of the Father to bestow, and of the benefits which the blood of the Son purchased; this he doth by working in the soul the saving grace of appropriating faith, by which all things communicable become the Christian's by present legal title, and eternal possession. Faith is a personal grace and brings in personal gains; hence it is said, "That the just shall live by his faith,"† not another's. Every man must have a faith of his own, we cannot be justified or saved by proxy. The scripture passes great encomiums on the grace of faith, faith is the captain grace, other graces fight under its standard; "Faith overcomes the world, purifies the heart, works by love," produces gospel repentance; it is that first link in the golden chain of graces with which the rest are connected; the leader in this virgin dance.‡ All the graces, like Solomon's virtuous woman, "have done worthily, but faith excels them all;" it is as the moon among the planets; "by faith we stand, by faith we have access to God, by faith we are saved."‖ And though love hath the preference in point of duration, yet we apprehend by faith, that we may enjoy by love. Faith conquers on earth, that love may triumph in heaven. But

* Cant. iii. 9, 10. Heb. x. 19, 20. † Hab. ii. 4.
‡ 1 John v. 4. Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. Zech. xii. 10. 2 Pet. i. 5.
‖ Prov. xxxi. 29. Rom. xi. 20. Eph. iii. 12. Eph. ii. 8.

there is no act of faith whereby it becomes more glorious than this of uniting the soul to God, "for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are justified by faith, Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith."* As our Lord Jesus is the blessed ligament to unite God and man, so faith is the bond which joins Christ and the soul, this it doth as receiving Christ; Christ is the enriching treasure, faith is the hand that receives it.† Our Lord Jesus dischargeth the debt, faith accepts the pardon, and pulls off the seal from the cancelled bond; Christ is the robe, faith puts it on. The infinitely wise God chose faith as the instrument to justify sinners, because fittest to secure the glory of his free grace, by excluding boasting in man;‡ God chose this grace of faith to stand so near him, as that with which he could best trust his honour in the justification of a sinner; It honours God, God honours it; it comes with an empty hand, yet fills the soul. This grace maketh us poor in our own sight, rich in God, as it strips the sinner of the impure rags of his own righteousness, and clothes him with the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ. I may say of it, as the apostles of themselves, "as poor yet making many rich." The true riches consist in being rich in faith. O happy soul, that hath this merchant ship, which bringeth food from afar, this indeed brings in succours, supports, supplies, and abundant satisfaction.‖ Happy man that hath this heavenly plant growing in his garden! Happy the man who with the hand of faith, can turn all it toucheth into gold! All creatures, as one saith, are as bullion, but faith in the covenant sets heaven's stamp on them, and so makes them current to us. I may also add, that all our duties are dross and counterfeit, unless they come to God with the impress of faith in Christ upon them, "for without faith it is impossible to please God."§ Now what is believing, but a taking hold of the covenant? This, this is the proper work of faith, it hath two hands, by one it receives God, by the other it gives itself to God, both these make an entire faith; if either be wanting the soul is lame, and hath nothing to do with the covenant or the promises. O but, say you, my hand is weak, if not lame; I ask, is it the hand of faith, ac-

* Gal. iii. 26. Eph. iii. 17. † John i. 12. ‡ Rom. iii. 27.
‖ James ii. 5. Prov. xxxi. 14. § Heb. xi. 4—6.

cording to scripture description? then it receives the offered gift and proper object. Cruciger dying, said, "I call on thee, though with a weak and languishing faith, yet notwithstanding a sincere faith;"* this grain of mustard seed, shall become a flourishing tree; this bruised reed shall be a strong staff to support thee on thy journey to heaven. There is nothing the devil envies and tempts God's children so much about, as this faith, and there is nothing so fit to quench his fiery darts, as the shield of faith, and this must be used above all other graces, as the chief grace.† And yet there is no grace, the sincere believer doubts the truth of, or fears a defect in, so much as faith. How oft doth the Christian cry out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."‡ And what pains have pious ministers taken with doubting souls to satisfy them, and comfort them concerning their faith? Now I am verily persuaded that this solemn personal covenanting with God would be an effectual cure of all those jealousies; for as a Christian's relation to God is made up by this, so the frequent renewing of it, and due reflection on sincerity in it, will give a person a prospect of his good circumstances God-wards, for what is a covenant engagement, but the renewed exercise of faith? and frequency of the exercise, both strengthens and evidences the habit. It hath been said that the Christian must repent till he know that he repents; and love God till he know that he loves God; and also he should believe till he know that he doth believe. Many walk in darkness and disquietness for want of understanding, or considering the terms of the new covenant, or not conceiving what that faith is which contracts or carries on this covenant relation; thou canst not but say, there have been special seasons of the out-goings of thy soul to God, and breathings after union with Christ. Many a time hast thou purposely set apart for conversing with thy best friend, taking him as thy God, and devoting thyself afresh to him; and what is this but covenanting? and what wilt thou call this but the exercise of faith? they are equivalent; canst thou not truly say as Pellican, "I desire my Jesus, how glad am I when I find him? how happy

* Invoco te quanquam languidâ et imbecillâ fide, sed fide tamen.—*Melch. Ad. in Cruc. pag.* 197.

† 1 Thess. iii. 5. Eph. vi. 16. ‡ Mark ix. 24.

am I when I hold him?"* If you say, but I lose my Lord, I answer, but thy Lord will not lose thee. This covenant relation is strongly maintained by the Lord of life, and thy business is frequently to renew thy repentance, to exercise faith, and pledge thyself again on renewing thy covenant with that God who hath promised to heal thy backslidings.

It is the design of this Treatise to bring souls into covenant with God, to keep them in it, and make it clear to them that they are within this blessed bond of the covenant. I had a private call to this public effort, and for a season took not much notice of it; I thought there was great store of printed treatises upon the covenant betwixt God and man, ten or twelve I have seen which are useful: but amongst them all, I never met with any upon this subject of personal covenanting, and was desirous to try what might be said for it; partly because several worthy men have given intimations of its necessity and usefulness, and partly because I perceive some well meaning persons have earnestly desired such helps, and have eagerly improved the short forms of covenant engagement which they have met with in print. And indeed, as due entering into covenant with God is essential to Christianity, so the frequent renewing of it and satisfactory reflections on our sincerity in making, and constancy in keeping it, are great means of our comfort; for God is faithful who hath promised, and though he may withdraw his comforting, or even his quickening presence for a season, yet he will not cast off for ever. He thinks good to correct our sins, and rouse us out of sloth, but he will turn again, he will have compassion upon us,† so that the covenanted Christian may say with Bucer,‡ "Let him chasten severely, yet he will never, no, he will never cast off: God forbid that now at last I should not taste the sweetest consolations." Fear not, Christian, thy comforts may ebb and flow, but thy covenant state is fixed and remains firm, and thou needest not fear what devils or men can do; they can but kill

* Jesum meum desidero, quam lætus cum invenero! quam fælix tenuero! —*Melch. Ad. in Vit. Pell. pag.* 548.

† Mic. vii. 19, 20.

‡ Castiget fortiter, abjiciet autem nunquam, nunquam abjiciet: absit, absit, ut nunc consolationes dulcissimas non experirer.—*Melch. Ad in Buc. pag.* 220.

the body, and that will convey thee sooner to thy head and husband. Besides this miserable life, saith a noble champion, "The devil and the world can take nothing from us."* It is worth something in a losing day, to enjoy a treasure which cannot be lost. Among the good tidings in the world, that is worth all the rest which is proclaimed to the cities of Judah, *behold your God*;† did you but know what a God he is you would leap for joy, you would boast of him, and be transported with the manifestations of God, your God and exceeding joy.

As for the infatuated world, I have little reason to expect that they will regard, but rather mock at the subject of this Treatise; the sons of Belial choose to be yokeless and lawless, they cannot frame to walk in these sacred trammels and bonds, they must have elbow room to sin, they little think they are dancing in the fetters of Satan. Oh what a sad sight it is to see rational creatures rattle as slaves in the devil's chains of drunkenness, uncleanness, profane swearing, or hatred of godliness; these poor diabolists, like the possessed man in the gospel, pluck asunder chains, and break fetters, so that no man can tame them.‡ Nay, they say of Christ's commands, "let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us."‖ They are Satan's volunteers, but Christ's sworn enemies; they cannot bear to be restrained by scripture rules, or to be pent up in the narrow limits of holy performances, it would be a death to them to pray, read, hear, or meditate so much. This would drive them into dumps and make them melancholy, yea, drive them beside themselves. Alas, poor unhappy beings, that must spend their life in pastimes, and licentious sports, and vanities! I despair of these reading what I have written, and leave them to the righteous judgment of God, either to tame them here by some overwhelming affliction, as he dealt with Manasseh, that the iron sinew of their obstinacy may be bent, and they be disposed to accept freely of Christ's yoke, which I earnestly desire: or they must be sent down to the prison of hell, to be reserved with devils in chains of darkness

* Præter vitam hanc misellam, Satanas et mundus nobis eripere nihil potest.—*Luth.*

† Isa. xl. 9. ‡ Mark v. 4. ‖ Psalm ii. 3.

to the judgment of the great day. In the meantime, God will hold such furious adversaries in the chains of restraint by his powerful providence; this will hold men and devils. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of the wrath thou wilt restrain."* Blessed be God for that.

But it is chiefly for your sakes who fear God, and who earnestly desire that your loose spirits may be kept closely attached to him, and preserved from starting aside, that I have undertaken the following discussion. You see the work before you, be not slack in setting about it, or indifferent in it: turn not your backs on God, but set your faces towards Zion: enquire the way: weep as you travel, and "join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."†

In hopes that I shall not altogether lose this labour of love to your souls, but shall meet with some that will read the Treatise, consider its contents, and engage in a transaction arranged for you, I take my leave, and shall follow it with my prayers. Heb. xiii. 20, 21, "That the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

* Psalm lxxvi. 10. † Jer. l. 4, 5.

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

BAPTISMAL BONDS.

PSALM L. 5.

Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

As all nations acknowledge a deity, or object of divine worship, so by a necessary consequence, they observe some sacred rites and solemnities which are by a general name called religion; which hath its name from a Latin word signifying to bind, and is in our old Saxon language called enfastness. Nothing within the compass of religion can so properly challenge that title, as the covenant, and therefore scripture mentions "The bond of the covenant," Ezek. xx. 37. Now religion, and particularly this sacred bond or tie of the covenant, connects and unites together *things* and *persons*. The things that religion or the covenant joins, are these two:—first, graces; secondly, conditions and privileges.

1. The covenant of God connects all the graces together in one subject or soul. Graces are not solitary but social; where one is in truth, all the rest are radically and in habit, though as to act and exercise, they make their appearance in different seasons and degrees.

The heart of a Christian is a receptacle of divine graces, as the sea is of waters, conveyed by the Holy Spirit from the fountain of grace in Christ: however the souls of the best have their ebbings and flowings, both as to graces and comforts, yet "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,"* that is, not a drop, but grace upon grace—not in infinite degrees, as in Christ, (to whom "God giveth not his Spirit by measure,"†) but in such a proportion as God thinks fit, and as is suitable to our capacities or necessities. But this is certain, that the divine nature or new creature, ushers in a whole troop or cluster of divine graces into the heart of a believer who is united to Christ. A sound union to Christ by faith, which is the covenant bond on our parts, doth entitle the sincere soul to all in Christ, that is communicable; only it is required, that faith be sincere and unfeigned, for truth or sincerity is denominated the girdle of truth, Eph. vi. 14; because upon it hang all the graces, like a string of pearls; for without truth, no grace is of the right stamp, acceptable to God, or available to us; but God "desireth truth in the inward parts,"‡ and truth is of so catholic a nature, that it runs through all a Christian's graces and actings to give a genuine character to them. It is true, sincere faith is the first pearl on this string of sincerity, but they are all within the heavenly circle of truth, as virgins in a round,‖ and such as are not in this circle, are cast out as counterfeits. The covenant links these together; for all graces are contained in it, and there is no grace without covenant relation.

2. Religion by the covenant binds conditions and privileges together, so that none can expect the saving

* John i. 16. † John iii. 34. ‡ Psal. li. 6.

‖ 2 Peter i. 5. Ἐπιχορηγήσατε i. e. chorum ducite,—allusio ad virginum saltationes.

advantages of religion, but he that performs the conditions required. Divine wisdom hath contrived this blessed method of shewing mercy and saving souls; faith and justification, repentance and remission, doing the commandments, and eating of the tree of life,* are linked together as with chains of adamant, and what God hath joined together no man can put asunder; "He is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him,"† and to none else. As sin and hell, so grace and glory‡ are inseparably conjoined. "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations?" saith God; as if he had said, "how shall I order that the seed of Abraham shall again be propagated, and enjoy the portion and possession of children?" He answers, "thou shalt call me, my father, and shalt not turn away from me, Jer. iii. 19; as I adopt them to be my children, so I will endow them with the spirit of adoption, and qualify them with a filial disposition; then, and never till then will they be capable of enjoying my promised inheritance: for bastards are not suitable heirs, and a slavish spirit is not fit for a child's work and patrimony. I will change their nature with their state, their disposition as well as relation." Thus there is an instituted connexion betwixt graces and privileges, duties and mercies, "without holiness no man shall see God:" spiritual life is the prologue to eternal life, "it is the pure in heart only that shall see God."‖ It is true, the promise and mercy promised, the grace of the condition, and mercy annexed are both from God in a covenant way, and both freely given, God absolutely promiseth,

* Acts xvi. 31. iii. 19. Rev. xxii. 14.
† Heb. v. 9. ‡ Psalm lxxxiv. 11.
‖ Heb. xii. 14. John xvii. 3. Matt. v. 8.

Christ freely purchased, the Spirit graciously worketh the qualifications, which he requireth, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. Though God be a free agent, yet by his promise he makes himself a debtor,* and by working the antecedent disposition, he engageth himself to bestow the mercy promised, though he owes us nothing. It is grace to Abraham to make a covenant with him, but truth to perform it to Jacob; hence God is faithful both in pardoning sin, and giving a crown of life to all that penitently confess sin, and sincerely love him;"† so God crowns his own graces in his saints.

Thus there is a connexion of things effected by the covenant.

As things, so persons are united and knit together in this bond of the covenant.

First, It binds men and men.

Secondly, God and man.

1. It binds men and men; it joins Christians' hearts one to another; "they that believe are of one heart, and one soul;" it is "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."‡ O sacred bond! O blessed unity, the ligaments are faith and love, by faith all the members are joined to the head, by love to each other, and this love or charity is the bond of perfectness;‖ the staff in Zechariah xi. 14, called bonds or binders, signified the brotherhood between Judah and Israel; the covenant promotes this, therefore it is called, the brotherly covenant.§ O happy conjunction! O sweet communion! Stronger is the bond of grace than nature.¶ Natural consanguinity or contracted affinity reaches not so high as this heavenly harmony; it is like that

* Reddis debita, nulli debens.—*Aug.*

† Mic. vii. 20. 1 John i. 9. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Acts iv. 32. Eph. iv. 3.

‖ Σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος, Col. iii. 14. § Amos i. 9.

¶ Sanctior est copula cordis quàm corporis.

endearedness betwixt Jonathan and David, passing the love of women. Nothing cements men's spirits so much as grace; piety begets sympathy; religion produceth bonds and bowels of compassion. Christian fellowship is the sweetest friendship, and friendship is called the salt that seasons a man's life;* but amongst wicked men there is no true friendship;† only converting grace turns the hearts of fathers to their children, and of children to their fathers; gospel grace makes the wolf to dwell with the lamb,‡ and sweetens men's spirits towards each other; yea, as the curtains of the tabernacle were joined by loops, so are real Christians joined by love; the more love the more union. Christianity pares off the roughness and rigidness of men's spirits, and makes them lie even in God's building; they that were hateful, hating one another, now are meek, gentle, tender-hearted, and easy to be entreated.|| The sweet cement which in one sure band connects the whole frame, is love and charity.

2. But the principal work of our religion is the connecting of God and man together, and this is chiefly effected by the bond of the covenant. "As the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man, so" saith God, "have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and Judah," Jer. xiii. 11. This is so generally owned to be the business of religion, that Plato calls it the soul's union to God, and he describes his philosopher, to be one akin to truth, and the end of philosophy to be assimilation to God, so far as is possible;§ yea, not only is this in act but in habit, by a propensity of the soul to God and goodness; even as there is in our eyes

* Condimentum vitæ. † Inter impios non est amicitia.
‡ Mal. iv. 6. Isa. xi. 6. || Tit. iii. 2, 3. James iii. 17, 18.
§ Συγγενὴς τῆς ἀληθείας.——ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν.—*Plato, in Timæo.*

a congenial kind of cognation or similitude to the light, which renders the contemplation thereof very pleasing; so it is between the mind and truth, the subject must bear some proportion to the object. Holy souls can only be united to a holy God; "evil dwells not with him; the throne of iniquity hath no fellowship with him; but the pure in heart shall see God, and the upright shall dwell in his presence."* Now this joining to the Lord is most properly by covenant; "Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten," Jer. l. 5. O blessed conjunction, that lays the foundation of eternal communion! "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."† As there is an ineffable unity of the three persons in the glorious Trinity, and an hypostatical union of two natures in one person,‡ so there is a mystical union of Christ and believers, as head and members make one body; they are actuated by the same Spirit of Christ, yet this union destroyeth not their personal individuality, nor doth it make them Christ, as the plants live by the sun beams, yet are not the sun; and though we cannot comprehend this union, yet certainly there is such a close conjunction, see 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

This joining to the Lord by personal covenanting, I am to insist upon from the text under hand. I shall not spend time needlessly to shew who was the penman of this Psalm, whether Asaph or David? when, or upon what occasion it was penned? whether, when the angel of the Lord appeared and appointed the habitation of the ark, 1 Chron. xxi. 18, 22; or what time the judgment so magnificently described must commence? whether it has respect to the prophet's present convic-

* Psal. v. 4. xciv. 20. Matt. v. 8. Psal. cxl. 13.
† 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‡ 1 John v. 7. Isa. vii. 14.

tion of what he describes, or the appearance of the Messiah, or the solemn day of judgment at last, or all these? Mal. iii. 2. Acts xvii. 31.

The design of the Psalm is, partly to reprove and protest against the common miscarriage of professors of religion, who satisfy their own consciences, and fancy they please God with external and ceremonial performances, but neglect the most necessary, and fundamental duties of piety, justice and charity; partly to instruct men concerning the nature of God's acceptable worship; partly to prepare the Israelites for, and tacitly to warn them of that change of their worship by the Messiah, and abolition of legal sacrifices, which God appointed not for the people's perpetual use, or because he had a necessity for them himself; for the time of reformation would, and did change priesthood, officers and orders, sacraments and church affairs, and put all things into a new garb and mould; to this most commentators apply this Psalm, and "rightly," saith Mollerus, "according to my judgment," and I find few dissent from it; Stephen's whole apology, Acts vii, argues the same very strenuously, that since such ceremonial worship was not instituted when Abraham was called, and was omitted mostly in the wilderness, therefore it was not principally intended, but secondarily, and for a season, and should have its period in gospel days.

The context presents us with a magnificent preamble, and introduction to this solemn judgment; represented in a poetical style, wherein we have:—

1. The tribunal erected out of Zion, the perfection of beauty.

2. The glorious Judge, our God shall come—a fire shall devour before him; alluding to his awful appearance on mount Sinai.

3. The witnesses are summoned, he calls the earth from sun-rising to sun-setting, to be spectators and witnesses of his righteous procedure.

4. The persons concerned, good and bad, gracious souls or wretched delinquents; "He shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth that he may judge his people," ver. 4. Heaven must send down holy souls, earth must yield up bodies out of its repositories, and hell must produce damned spirits to stand before God's splendid tribunal.*

5. Here is the general commission to God's officers to bring forth all the seed of Adam; as if he had said, Go ye angels, summon and fetch them to my tribunal. These are sent "with a great sound of a trumpet, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."†

6. We have the trial of the malefactors, and convincing evidence of God's dealings with the sons of men: answering their cavils from ver. 6, to ver. 22.

7. The sentence is passed, judgment also threatened, and will be certainly executed without repentance, verse 22.

To come closer to the words, which are a description of the persons who shall make their solemn appearance before this glorious tribunal.

The main query is, who are these sain' ? Some say the Levites, because he designs to abrogate the legal sacrifices; others say, the merciful ones, well doers, either actively, those that do good, or passively, those to whom he does good, so the word is taken, Psal. lxxxvi. 2. The Israelites are certainly meant by this word, saints, because they had made a covenant with him by sacrifice; but whether it be sincere worshippers, or common formal professors it is disputed. Some think

* 1 Thess. iv. 16. Isa. xxvi. 19. Rev. xx. 13. † Matt. xxiv. 31.

it is the whole body of the people of Israel, good and bad, sinners and hypocrites; they are all called saints, because they were all by profession a holy people, devoted to God;* others think that by an irony they are so denominated, intimating how unworthy they were of that name, as the master called the unworthy guest, friend;† others think this is a notable conviction of them, and evidence against them to aggravate their present apostacy, since God had separated them from all nations of the earth, to be a peculiar people to himself; yea, they had solemnly and frequently devoted themselves to God, as his faithful servants. Oh lamentable degeneracy!

But I am more disposed to think it refers to real saints, sanctified souls, upright-hearted worshippers.

1. Because both are described and distinguished in this Psalm; the godly by "offering unto God thanksgiving, and paying their vows to the Most High," ver. 14; that is the most welcome sacrifice, a verbal, cordial, and sincere gratitude; a heart flaming on God's altar with heavenly praises, and paying not only ceremonial but moral vows, these are preferred to all sacrifices, as this and other scriptures testify.‡

2. Because this agrees with the context and design of the Psalm, which demonstrates the invalidity and insignificancy of all their sacrifices, except therewith they made a solemn covenant with God. Take the sense of the text in this paraphrase, as if it were,—I the great Jehovah, being about to judge the world, give out my orders to angels, to bring forth my sanctified ones, the king's seed, in order to their solemn coronation, and though they have been scorned by a company of formalists, that pleased themselves in pompous and ceremonial worship, and imagine they please

* Deut. xiv. 2. † Matt. xxii. 12. ‡ Psal. lxix. 30, 31.

me with their legal sacrifices; these my saints by faith looked beyond the offering to the antitype Jesus Christ, the substance which these shadows represented, they vowed their souls and bodies to me as well as bulls and goats, and took me for their God in all their attendance on me, and I take them as consecrated to me; they stayed not at the outside and circumstantials, but minded the essentials of religion, and truly that is the chief thing in my estimation; my precept was, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name;"* this was the chief commandment. "I spake not so much to their fathers, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as obedience to my commands;"† my saints have chiefly minded this, and not left the other undone, and I approve of them, bring them now to me, who have in all their services "engaged their hearts to approach unto me;"‡ these are the worshippers that I seek, "that worship me in spirit and truth;"‖ these I purpose to crown with glory; this, this, (I would have you know) is the proper nature, use, and end of ordinances. Sacrifices were never instituted for themselves, but to be signs and seals of the covenant betwixt God and his people, as evidences of their gratitude to me, and means to convince them of their guilt, and liability to death, and so lead them to the Lamb of God, who by his immolation and satisfaction taketh away the sins of the world;§ and when once in the fulness of time the covenant is confirmed by the blood of Christ, you may expect the abolition of all legal sacrifices.

The doctrines that this text holds forth for our instruction are these:—

* Deut. x. 20. † Jer. vii. 22—24. ‡ Jer. xxx. 21.
‖ John iv. 23. § John i. 29.

1. *Doct.* That God's people are real saints. Believers are sanctified; the relative change is attended with a real change; 1 Cor. vi. 11, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." There are saints by calling, as the church of Corinth, being sanctified (or dedicated) to God in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,* by way of profession, before men in the judgment of charity; but these are really sanctified, saints before God, real members of Christ, such of whom the apostle speaks, 1 Thess. iii. 13, "To the end he may stablish your hearts, unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints;" those only are properly saints that shall be found to be saints at that solemn day.

2. *Doct.* God hath special seasons for calling his saints together to him.

(1.) There is a congregating, and gathering of saints to God by saving conversion; Gen. xlix. 10, "To him shall the gathering of the people be." The Gentiles shall be converted, and united all in one body, which is Christ.

(2.) In point of visible communion of saints in the ordinances of God. Thus our Lord gathers his lambs in his arms, brings them by flocks into folds for mutual society with each other, and with God.†

(3.) In times of danger to secure them from evils ready to seize on them; I would have gathered them, saith Christ, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings;‡ by conversion first, then for protection.

(4.) There is a great and solemn day of gathering together the whole world; this is emphatically called a gathering together, and particularly this of the saints gathering, 2 Thess. ii. 1, "Now we beseech you

* 1 Cor. i. 2. † Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 13. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 37.

brethern, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him."* O blessed synagogue! O brilliant congregation! That indeed will be "a general assembly, and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven;"† those that sleep in Jesus, our Lord will bring with him, and they that are alive shall be caught up to him in the air, and both shall ever be with the Lord. O solemn day! august meeting! there was never such a meeting, either for quality, or number.

[i.] Their quality. They areall saints, not nominally, but really—not merely by profession, but by principle, practice, and spiritual relation to God; hypocrites shall not crowd in among them, nor appear before him, they are called, and chosen, and faithful, every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; the tares will be cast out, and only the wheat gathered into his garner; the bad fish rejected, and only the good put into vessels;‡ there shall enter into that city nothing that defileth, person or thing.‖ O what a glorious congregation of saints will that be! "They shall all be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."§ O spotless society of holy souls!

[ii.] Their number. As there is a hundred and forty four thousand of the tribes of Israel, there is besides "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."¶ Daniel saith, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."** It is true, they are now but a little flock compared with the multitude of the wicked

* Ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ' αὐτὸν. † Heb. xii. 23. 1 Thess. iv. 14, 17.
‡ Job xiii. 16. Isa. iv. 3. Matt. iii. 12. xiii. 41, 48.
‖ Rev. xxi. 27. § Rev. xix. 8.
¶ Rev. vii. 9. ** Dan. vii. 10.

around them, but absolutely considered by themselves they shall be many, when they shall be all congregated that have lived from the beginning to the end of the world; there will be no want of good company, yet there will be room enough for them in that city above.

3. *Doct.* God deals with man by way of covenant. This hath been his manner with mankind ever since there was man on the face of the earth; when God had created the first man Adam, he entered into covenant with him, which was a covenant of friendship,* and gave him faculties, and ability to perform perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; but he violating that covenant, God again entered into another covenant called a new covenant, or covenant of reconciliation,† contracted betwixt an offended God, and fallen man; these are commonly distinguished into "the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace;" and it may be worth while in a few words, to explain the difference between them, and the rather because, as Luther saith, the whole scripture, and the knowledge of theology depend upon the right distinguishing of law and gospel;‡ and he earnestly admonisheth ministers to study the difference between the two covenants. The work is attended with difficulty, but I find something hinted to my hand in Dr. Ames's Med. Theol. lib. i. chap. 24. pag. 103, which I shall translate and improve.

1. These two covenants differ [*genere*] in kind, the former covenant being a covenant of friendship, between persons at amity, the infinite Creator, and Adam his perfect creature, to manifest man's dependance on God, and try his obedience; but now the case

* Fœdus amicitiæ. † Fœdus reconciliationis.

‡ Universa scriptura totiusque theologiæ cognitio pendet in rectâ cognitione legis et evangelii.—*Luth. Tom. i. lat.* 355.

is altered, man is fallen, and hath offended his sovereign. This second covenant is intended to conciliate and establish a new made friendship between these parties at variance; this second covenant sets all at rights between an offended God, and offending man.

2. They differ [*fundamento*] in the foundation of both; as to the former, though divine decrees did define it, yet there was not such a foundation laid for the first, as there was for the second covenant, for with respect to this covenant of grace or reconciliation, it was founded upon an antecedent covenant, which divines call a covenant of redemption, or a glorious transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, from all eternity, ordering what the Son should be and do on man's behalf, in the human nature, and what assistance and recompense he should receive from the Father; there were mutual promises before the world began, Tit. i. 2. 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. The whole gospel covenant is a glorious transcript of this blessed original.

3. They differ [*principio*] in the principle, or moving cause, for in the former God acts as a wise and righteous governor, who did consult and contrive a way to maintain his government, and keep man in an humble subjection. In this latter, free grace and mercy principally take place, free grace was the motive in God's heart that engaged him to re-enter into this covenant. It is true, in the former there was grace conspicuous, when God condescended to deal so familiarly with his creature, and render himself so amiable, so amicable, and approachable by so mean a creature as man, so much his inferior, yea, and promise a reward to man's obedience, this was kindness; but free grace abounded in the latter, for it is mercy to a creature in misery, the kindness and love [or philanthropy] of God our Saviour transcendently shone

forth or appeared—and its influences are shed on us abundantly, or poured out richly on lost mankind.* This covenant is nothing else but a compound of love and mercy.

4. They differ [*efficiente*] in the efficient cause, in the management of the transaction on man's part; in the former covenant there were two parties, though not without great disparity. Man was at first furnished with faculties and ability to enter into, and keep the covenant made with him; but now fallen man is spiritually dead, and though still he retains his faculties, yet he hath lost the rectitude of them, and ability to perform his part of the conditions; it is true the parties are still two, formally considered, yet if we consider the efficacy which secures the due performance of the terms, all lies on God's part; who works in us the conditions, which he requires of us, as faith, repentance, and new obedience. The agent is man, the efficient cause of that agency is God's grace; as in natural things we live and move, from God's providence; so in spiritual things our holy actions proceed from his gracious influence: as Augustin saith, there are many good things that God doth in man, that man doth not, but there is no holy action that man doth, but God doth enable him to do it. †

5. They differ [*objecto*] in the object. The chief object concerned in the first covenant was all mankind, (though it referred to Adam more immediately,) the first man being the root, spring, and representative head of all mankind. Adam was the first person with whom this covenant was made, yet it was not only personal, but comprehensive, and extended to all man's posterity,

* Tit. iii. 4, 6.

† Nulla bona facit Deus in homine quæ non facit homo, nulla vero facit homo quæ non facit Deus ut faciat.—*Aug. Enchir.*

therefore when he violated that covenant, it was imputed to us, his fault was our guilt; "for in Adam all sinned," see Rom. v. 12, 16. But this second covenant is personal, it is contracted with individual souls; it is true, the general grant is to all, the proclamation is universal, *whosoever will*, it is offered promiscuously, but the saving benefits of this covenant reach no further with respect to persons at age, than those that by faith apply them,* by particularly laying hold of this blessed covenant; it is only the seed, believers, heirs of the promise, children of the covenant,† that are sharers in it, Gal. iii. 22.

6. The first covenant, and this new gospel covenant differ [*materia*] in the matter, or good things promised, in the former God promised life only, "Do this and live;" he did not promise continuance of life absolutely, but upon condition of man's obedience, nor yet his restitution in case he fell, for fall once, and fall finally, there is no recovery by virtue of that old covenant. But now by this gospel covenant, God promiseth many rich blessings which in this our fallen state are needful for us, as pardon of sin, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, means of grace, daily supports, perseverance, a crown of glory; God gives grace and glory by virtue of it, and what tends to both, and that immutably without failure or defectibility; see Jer. xxxi. 34—36. xxxiii. 20, 21. Isa. liv. 9, 10.

7. They differ [*conditionibus*] in the conditions of both; indeed some say obedience is the condition on man's part under both covenants, but surely not the same obedience, the former required personal, perfect, absolute, and perpetual obedience to the commands, both moral and positive, without any deviation to the right-hand, or to the left, if he failed in the least punc-

* Hab. ii. 4. † Heb. vi. 17. Acts iii. 25. Rom. iv. 16.

tilio, he was under the curse, Gal. iii. 10; and this obedience must be performed by strength of grace received in his first creation; since man was able to perform it, this condition was highly reasonable. But in the gospel covenant the great condition is faith; a free acceptance of the offered grace, an unfeigned faith, which is not an antecedent condition to the making of the covenant, but subsequent, or intermediate for man's laying hold, and receiving the benefits thereof; yea, God promiseth and worketh what he requires; all faith, repentance, and new obedience, are the gifts of free grace;* grace doth all, Rom. iv. 16.

8. They differ [*effectis*] in the effects of both. The former covenant sheweth what is just, fit, and meet to be done, but ministereth no strength, and therefore man that was under it did not actually keep it; the first covenant never brought salvation to any one soul that was under it; but now this gospel covenant is a quickening spirit, conferreth grace, assisteth all who are under it, and hath brought thousands to heaven, it never faileth of attaining the end, in its own nature it brings life and happiness, 2 Cor. iii. 6—9. Heb. vii. 19. The former is a ministration of condemnation and death,† consequentially because man cannot keep it; this other is a ministration of the Spirit, righteousness and salvation;‡ the former never saves, the latter never finally condemns, but always saves such as are sincerely, and perseveringly within the compass of it.

9. They differ [*adjuncto durationis*] in the adjunct of duration. The former covenant is antiquated and superseded by the latter, and such as are within the new covenant, are "not under the law, but under grace," and so are "delivered from the curse of the law;"

* Eph. ii. 8. Acts v. 31. Ezek. xi. 19, 20.
† Peccatori mortifera. ‡ Rom. viii. 2.

those are dead to the law, who are married to Christ."* The new covenant is perpetual and unalterable, it shall continue to the end of time, as it commenced near the beginning of time, as it was designed before all time; "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven,"† it reacheth from eternity, and to all eternity; it was laid in the eternal councils of God, before the world began, and will continue as to its efficacy, when there will be no world; God hath fixed this way of salvation, and will not repent, or retract it.‡

10. The old covenant and new differ [*sponsore*] as to the admission of a surety, the former had none, the latter hath; this indeed is the chief difference betwixt the two covenants. As to the former, the whole weight of this massy fabric of man's happiness was laid on man's shoulders, who though he was of a giant strength by creation, yet he was but a creature, and if God put no trust in his servants, yea his angels he charged with folly,‖ how short must man needs be? who though he was perfect in his kind, yet not immutably perfect, and to our sorrow we feel he lost that happiness; but now God hath "laid help upon one that is mighty,"§ even the right hand of omnipotency hath strengthened him; "I will preserve thee, saith God, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to stablish the earth."¶ This, this is the distinguishing characteristic of this glorious dispensation; this forms the Jachin and Boaz of the house of God; this only is the pearl of price that enricheth and adorneth the gold ring of the gospel covenant; this rendereth God approachable by man; this is the rainbow round about the throne;** this is what rendereth the state of cove-

* Rom. vi. 14. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. vii. 4.
† Psal. cxix. 86, 89. ‡ Psal. cxi. 9. ‖ Job iv. 18.
§ Psal. lxxxix. 19, 20. ¶ Isa. xlix. 8. ** Rev. iv. 3.

nanted souls safe and durable, and elevateth the second covenant so many degrees above the first: "By so much," saith the apostle, "was Jesus made a surety of a better testament," Heb vii. 22; and therefore was it better, because it is in Jesus Christ, this better surety; and now the flames of the burning mount are quenched, the piercing sword has lost its edge, the blackness, darkness, and tempests are removed; Moses may draw near, and not exceedingly fear and quake;* people may endure that which is commanded, for it is ordained in the hands of a mediator.†

Here also this question might be agitated, Whether the covenant of grace be the same under the old testament as under the new?

Answ. Divines generally conclude, that for substance they are the same.

The efficient cause, namely, God's free grace, in making a covenant with men, was the same; the condition the same, that is faith; the design was the same, God's glory, and the good of souls; yet there is a great difference in the manner of administration, consisting in several accidental, mutable circumstances.

1. The old testament exhibited and promised salvation to those who believed in a mediator yet to come, we believe in the Messiah already come.‡

2. To them the gospel was darkly, to us clearly revealed.

3. Temporal good things were more ordinarily promised them,‖ our blessings are of a more spiritual nature.§

4. The seals annexed to them were circumcision and the passover, to us baptism, and the Lord's supper.¶

* Heb. xii. 18—24. † Gal. iii. 19.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. Heb. ix. 11. ‖ Deut. xxviii.
§ Eph. i. 3. 1 Cor. x. 4. ¶ Acts xv. 28.

5. The ceremonies of old, were numerous, costly, obscure, and burdensome, compared with ours.

6. In the old testament, the Holy Ghost was imparted sparingly, in the new abundantly.*

7. The covenant of old, was confined to the Jewish nation, now is it extended to Gentiles.†

8. In the Jewish pedagogy, the spirit of bondage prevailed, in gospel times a child-like disposition discovers itself.‡

9. The law and prophets were till John, but now a change of dispensation has taken place.‖

But I shall not spend time in repeating what you may find in so many treatises upon the covenants.

4. *Doct.* That God appoints his saints to make a covenant with him by sacrifice.

Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice [*de sacrificio*, or *de sacrificandi ratione*] § in regard to sacrifice, or according to the law, rite and order of sacrificing, that is, the act of the saint's covenanting with God, and will duly observe God's order in sacrificing, as they did, Neh. x. 29, 32, 35—39; and this is one part of a Christian's covenant, to bring all his offerings to the Lord, according to his own institution.

By sacrifice, so our translation, upon a sacrifice,¶ or whensoever you bring your sacrifice, then must you covenant with God; others with a sacrifice,** you must join covenant and sacrifice together; others read it, by a sacrifice,†† as the means, manner, and way of covenanting; others beyond the sacrifice,‡‡ esteeming the covenant more necessary, and of greater value than sacrifice, or not resting merely in outward sacrifices,

* Isa. xliv. 3. John vii. 38. † Eph. ii. 14. ‡ Gal. iv. 1—7.
‖ Luke xvi. 16. Heb. vii. 12, 18. § עלי זבח de sacrificio.
¶ Super sacrificio, i. e. adhibito sacrificio.
** Cum sacrificio. †† Per sacrificium. ‡‡ Ultra sacrificium.

but going beyond, even to covenanting to be the Lord's, and reaching after communion with God in ordinances: all these come to one thing, Psal. xl. 6, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire," that is, in comparison with a heart devoted to God, and covenanting with him. God is not pleased with any sacrifices we bring, except we present ourselves to him. Sincere saints satisfy not themselves with external sacrifices to God, except they entertain and meet with God therein. It was a famous saying of St. Augustin, "O Lord, thy gifts please not me, except thou give me thyself, and nothing that I can bring thee, will be acceptable to thee, except I devote myself to thee." Cain's offering may seem as good as Abel's, only Abel brought faith in Christ, and gave himself to God in the new covenant. In the covenant of works, the person is accepted for the work's sake: in the covenant of grace the work is accepted for the person's sake; if the soul be devoted to God and accepted through the Mediator, a mean duty is graciously received and made welcome; but the costliest services are not regarded, if coming from an enemy to God, for unto such God saith here, "Psal. l. 16, "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" as if he had said, thou wicked hypocrite, thou thinkest to satisfy me fully with sacrifices, and please me with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil;* thou art mistaken, I am not so well pleased with mere sacrifices, burnt offerings, or calves of a year old, these are not the main of my requirements, I have other things in mine eye,† thou dost not hear me reprove thee for want of sacrifices, this is not the principal accusation or charge I have against thee, for though thou hast often

* Micah vi. 6, 7. † Psal. l. 8.

omitted these, yet hast thou more failed in moral duties, and then thought by these offerings to make me amends, and appease my wrath, for the errors of thy life, and thinkest by this means to pacify the outcries of thy self-condemning conscience. I now tell thee what my real saints do, whom I accept, and will gather to me in that solemn day, to enjoy myself, these do according to my appointment, make a covenant with me by sacrifice, that is, they did at first enter into, and they do daily renew their covenant with me by sacrifice.

As preparatory to my main design of examining a believer's personal covenanting with God, I shall say something on this inquiry.—What is covenanting with God by sacrifice?

CHAP. II.

TO ASCERTAIN WHAT SACRIFICES HAVE BEEN PRESCRIBED AND ACCEPTED WHEN MEN HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH GOD?

In answer to this inquiry, I shall very briefly mention four sorts of sacrifices, in which I find by God's own command and with his approbation, God's children have entered into, and renewed their covenant with the Lord: namely, typical, providential, evangelical, and eucharistical sacrifices.

1. In the old testament there were typical sacrifices, which were types and figures of Christ about to come in the flesh, Heb. x. 1, "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the

things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." Now the typical sacrifices of the old testament were of two sorts, patriarchal and Mosaical, in both of these there was covenanting by sacrifice.

(1.) As to patriarchal sacrifices, we have a famous instance of a covenant between God and Abraham by sacrifice, in Gen. xv. 9—18, "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram," in that day, and in that mode of sacrificing: for the heifer, she-goat, ram, &c. ver. 9, were taken [*in usum vel symbolum fœderis*] for the use, symbol, or pledge of covenanting between them; and though Abraham's sacrificing was before the law, yet doubtless it was a type of Christ, and so was the ram caught in the thicket, and offered instead of Isaac,* and they were afterwards prescribed in the Levitical law; dividing them in the midst, was a rite used in making covenants, Jer. xxxiv. 18, that the parties covenanting might pass between those parts, and so testify their union and participation in one and the same sacrifice, as one, yet divided, and so the passage saith, ver. 17, a burning lamp passed between those pieces; God is called a consuming fire, and both smoke and fire are elsewhere mentioned, as signs of God's appearance;† and in Jeremiah there is mention of cutting the calf in twain and passing between the parts thereof, a solemnity used in making a covenant, to strike the greater terror into the spirits of such as should afterwards violate that covenant, as if it were said, let him be cut asunder, let his soul and body be separated, let the members of his body be divided, as this slain beast who shall violate this sacred oath; hence comes the word to cut a covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 3, "I have made or *cut* a covenant with my chosen;" this is indeed the

* Gen. xxii. 2—18. † Heb. xii. 29. Exod. iii. 2. xix. 9, 18.

phrase in the words of my text, "those that have made or *cut* a covenant with me by sacrifice,"* as Abram did who divided those creatures in the midst, and passed between them: so both God and Abram did mutually confirm the covenant by sacrificing.

(2.) There were Mosaical sacrifices, wherein Moses and the ancient Jews covenanted with God; their sacrifices were many, there was their burnt-offering, meat-offering, peace-offering, sin-offering, trespass-offering, and the offerings of consecration:† all these were appendices of gospel grace, types of Christ and the covenant of grace; wherein the saints under the old testament made, renewed, and confirmed their covenant with God, according to God's institution. I shall only select one instance, it is in Exod. xxiv. 3—8, the people say, ver. 3, "All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do;" this they did readily and rashly promise, as not being sensible of the great comprehensiveness, strictness and spirituality of God's law, or their own weakness. The altar represented God in Christ, the twelve pillars, the twelve tribes of Israel; ver. 4, these are the parties and young men offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord, ver. 5, here were the Hola, and Shelamim, burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings: and Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, to signify that God was appeased and atoned by this blood, as it represented the blood of Jesus; another text saith, he sprinkled it upon the book, to shew that the law was satisfied, and justice pacified by our dear Lord Jesus;‡ then, ver. 8, he sprinkled the

* כורתי בריתי עלי זבח Percutientes pactum meum super sacrificio.

† Hola, Mincha, Shelamim, Hataah, Asham, Milluim.

‡ Heb. ix. 19.

blood upon the people, that is, upon the twelve pillars that represented the twelve tribes, or on the twelve youths, the first-born that sacrificed, or on the elders of the people, or on the people that drew near: this signified,

First, their ratification of the the covenant on their parts, and an implicit wishing of the effusion of their own blood if they did not keep it.

Secondly, the sprinkling of their consciences with the blood of Christ,* and their obtaining redemption, justification, and access to God through it alone; and thus it is called the blood of the covenant, that is, by which the covenant was made and confirmed,† so it is usually called in other scriptures; and betwixt these sprinklings on the altar and people, Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people, then was God's part declared, and they said, "All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient," ver. 7, here was the people's voluntary consent. This is an express platform of the mutual covenant made by sacrifice; this was the first solemn covenant between God and Israel, often repeated and renewed afterwards, which for brevity I omit: this is making a covenant by typical sacrificing.

2. There is in scripture mention made of a providential sacrifice, that is, some remarkable act of providence whereby some men's lives are taken away by slaughter, mediately by man, or immediately by the Lord himself, and this either, of the wicked, or of the godly.

(1.) Of wicked men, the church's enemies, Jer. xlvi. 10, "The Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north-country," that is, of the Egyptians; justice shall make a terrible slaughter of his incurable enemies; this is called a sacrifice, because the power and justice of

* Heb. ix. 14. † Matt. xxvi. 28. Luke xxii. 20.

God are eminently glorified: by such a sacrifice as this there is a covenant made sometimes betwixt God and souls: hence that lasting covenant of the priesthood granted to Phinehas and his posterity, for his being zealous for God's glory, in slaying Zimri and Cosbi, Num. xxv. 8, 12. Phinehas was not a private but public person, and did it upon a divine command: "Wherefore, behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace," saith God; as a happy effect of this heroic action, whereby he made peace between God and his people, and partly with regard to the principal end of his office as priest, which was to mediate between God and man, and so obtain reconciliation; I confess the text saith, "it was the covenant of an everlasting priesthood," ver. 13, but this proves what I say, that a covenant may be made by such a sacrifice. Blood shed in God's cause, and upon a divine call, was so far from polluting him, and thereby casting him out of his priesthood, that it was a means to confirm him in it, God calls this a covenant of life and peace.* O what security, serenity, satisfaction and communion with God had the faithful priests under the law, and spiritual priests in the gospel, by virtue of this confirmed covenant! And this act of justice is called a consecration, Exod. xxxii. 29, "Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord, every man upon his son, and upon his brother, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day:" the word is *fill your hands*, that is consecration: thus they offered themselves in a difficult service for God, with the hazard of their lives, therefore it was their oblation or consecration of themselves to God, and though it might seem a barbarous, yet was really an acceptable work to God; as the destruction of God's enemies is called a sacrifice:† but this is very rare.

* Mal. ii. 5. † Isa. xxxiv. 6. Ezek. xxxix. 17.

(2.) There is another sort of providential sacrifice, and that is martyrdom; when God's children give their lives for the testimony of the truth, resist unto blood, overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and love not their lives unto the death,* this is called a sacrifice, Phil. ii. 17, "yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all:" the word σπένδομαι signifies a being poured out as a drink-offering,† which was an appurtenance to the meat-offering; and was never offered alone, but in conjunction with the slain sacrifices: for what signifies our blood without Christ. This is a precious and blessed sacrifice, whereby God's children do seal the covenant with their blood: Maimonides expounds my text of those that confirm the covenant of God with their death, saying,‡ that they chose rather to die than suffer themselves to profane the name of God; now this is every man's duty. It is a most certain truth, that none go to heaven but martyrs, either [*voto*, or *facto*,] in vow and resolution, or in performance or execution: for such as will not in a firm purpose of heart and preparation of soul forego all worldly enjoyments, and life itself for Christ's sake, cannot be his disciples: truth itself affirms this, Luke, xiv. 26. The soldiers that will not venture and willingly lose their lives for our dear Lord that laid down his life for us, shall be discarded his service; this, this is a noble way of covenanting by sacrifice; thousands have gone in this way to the celestial Canaan. O how blessed a thing it is to mount to heaven in a fiery cha-

* Rev. xii. 11. 2 Tim. iv. 6. Si pro libamento offerar.—*Beza.*

† Num. xv. 5. Num. xxviii. 7.

‡ Mori præoptantes quam ut se ad prophanandum Dei nomen adigi patiantur.

riot! The martyr said,* O Christ, in flames of fire, this soul I offer thee; here is a brave offering, to sacrifice all that is dear to us, to the rage of the worst of men, rather than prostitute conscience to the pleasure of men; this is a sacred tie, a strong band that is twisted with the saint's blood, and consecrated by the blood of Christ. This is the next sort of covenanting by sacrifice, and is no more than what God sometimes calleth for, and saints chearfully submit to; consult Acts, xx. 24. xxi. 13. Psal. xliv. 22. Rom. viii. 35, 36. Rev. ii. 13. vi. 9, 11.

3. There is an evangelical, ilastical sacrifice, which is Christ's meritorious death upon the cross, to satisfy the justice of God for the sins of men. This is the proper evangelical sacrifice; Eph. v. 2, "Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour;" this answers to all the types of the old testament, they all centre in Christ, they ceased on his once "appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; this is the blood of the new testament, or covenant, that was shed for many for the remission of sins;"† this blood speaks good things to us, it declares that prophecies are accomplished, shadows vanished, promises confirmed, law satisfied, Satan nonsuited, sins pardoned, and souls saved that actually enter into covenant with God by faith in Christ; and though sacrifices have varied as to external administration, yet the covenant is the same in all generations, and Christ is that "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world."‡ As to the virtue of his efficacious sufferings, all providential sufferings look to

* Hanc animam in flammis offero, Christe, tibi.

† Heb. ix. 26. x. 14. Matt. xxvi. 28. ‡ Rev. xiii. 8.

this, for if a man give his body to be burnt, and that sacrifice be not salted with Christ's merits, it will neither be acceptable to God nor available to himself; as this one only sacrifice terminates all typical, so it consecrates all providential sacrifices. And this blood confirms the covenant made to the fathers, and to us, therefore is Christ called the covenant of the people, as he only is the bond to unite God and man;* hence also he is called the mediator of the covenant, the angel, the surety,† that undertakes for both parties, and by his blood makes them friends, yea at once he reconciles both Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;‡ thus the covenant of grace foundeth a universal church,‖ purchased and sealed by the blood of Christ; Zech. ix. 11, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant," or whose covenant is by blood, "I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein there is no water." Blood brings expiation to justice, and salvation from hell; this is the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;§ it is true, this blood crieth out against us as Abel's blood, for revenge, if unbelievers, but saveth us by satisfying punitive justice, as applied by saving faith, so that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.¶ Observe this, that whatever covenants you make with God, and not in Christ, they are void and insignificant. Your persons must be united to Christ, and your covenants must be ratified by this blessed sacrifice, or they find no acceptance with God, and will be of no advantage to you; "For our Lord Jesus hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us

* Isa. xlii. 6. xlix. 8.
† Heb. vii. 22. viii. 6. Mal. iii. 1.
‡ Eph. ii. 16. ‖ Dan. ix. 27. § Heb. xii. 24. ¶ Eph. i. 7.

to God," that is, by covenanting or intercourse with him, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19.

4. The last sort of sacrifices, are eucharistical sacrifices,* or thank-offerings, grateful remembrances of God's kindnesses; there is no expiatory offering for sin properly, but Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, and antitype of all the types of old: there were also testificatory sacrifices, such as were symbols of divine worship, testimonies of man's gratitude and obedience; for under this notion of thankfulness must be comprized, not only verbal praises, but all that duty which God commandeth, and a Christian performeth: hence some have entitled the practical part of divinity, treatises on gratitude, or thankfulness, for all that a Christian doth God-wards, is the debt of gratitude, and yet God is pleased to call it all by the name of sacrifice; Psal. cvii. 22, "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving:" these are minchæ or the meat-offerings, and shelamim the peace-offerings, returns of gratitude for mercies received; and there were also vows and free-will-offerings, the difference between which is this, that in the free-will-offering, the worshippers did present the thing itself unto the Lord, but in a vow they did first promise it, being, it may be, not in a capacity to perform it, at that time, as Jonah in the whale's belly.

This last sort of gospel sacrifices I shall reduce to these four particulars:—namely, *a broken heart, self-dedications, acts of charity,* and *prayer and praises.*

I shall briefly consider, both how these may be called sacrifices, and how real saints make a covenant with God by these sacrifices; which will be introductory to that which I chiefly intend.

* Εὐχαριστικὰ.

(1.) A broken heart, Psal. li. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;" one broken heart stands in the room of many costly sacrifices; a heart grieved for sin, sensible of God's dishonour and displeasure is more valued by the Lord, than a house full of sacrifices, he had said, ver. 16, "thou desirest not sacrifice," which is not to be understood absolutely, but comparatively; a tender, melting, contrite heart, is more acceptable than all other offerings. "My son, give me thy heart,"* saith God; mind, will, conscience, and affections must be entirely offered to God, the whole heart, yet a broken heart; undivided, yet grieved under the guilt of sin; a sincere, prompt heart, yet a rent, relenting heart;† bring that to God, bind that close to him in covenant; a melted heart is fittest for impressions,‡ yea, a heart of flesh is a great branch of the new covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26: this is the most proper to write God's laws on, this only will be cast into a gospel-mould, he that bears his broken heart in the hand of saving faith, and offers it to God through Christ, hath made a covenant with God by sacrifice, then will our Lord bind up the wounds of this broken-hearted sinner; God will dwell with this man of a contrite spirit,‖ to such a one will he look, when he overlooks others, such only will enter, and be received into covenant with God; a melting broken heart only, passes in the channel of the new covenant, God-wards.

(2.) Self-dedication: not only is a broken heart, but the whole body a sacrifice, Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service:" as if he had said, I beseech you as you have a due sense of

* Prov. xxiii. 26. † Joel ii. 12, 13.
‡ 2 Cor. iii. 3. Rom. vi. 17. ‖ Isa. lxi. 1. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2.

Christ's offering himself a sacrifice for our sins, and of your salvation by grace, as Gentiles who have also been delivered from legal bondage, and costly sacrifices of beasts, that you dedicate yourselves wholly to God, in entire obedience to divine commands, this is an important and blessed service of God: "yield your members as servants to righteousness, unto holiness;"* this is nothing else but the covenanting of which I speak, every obligation laid upon us by God, calls for a fresh exhibition of ourselves unto the Lord, using our members not as our own, but the Lord's; mortifying earthly members, beating down the body, and keeping it in subjection to the soul,† and soul and body for the Lord; that the whole man may be regulated and ordered according to scripture rules. O blessed bond! O holy sacrifice! Jews offered a dead beast, Christians bring a living offering; theirs was passive, this is active: the living soul animating these useful organs brings *both* to the Former of all things: the body is not slain for God, yet is devoted to God. The sacrifice is entire, actuated not only by a rational soul but by a spiritual principle; the body lives, yet the deeds of the body die; the man converseth amongst men as others, yet lives to God; here is the mystery of this blessed covenanting, here is the marrow of this divine sacrificing.

(3.) Acts of charity: these are a true evangelical sacrifice, Heb. xiii. 16, "But to do good, and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" the former word εὐποιεία, doing well, refers to our actions; κοινωνία communicating refers to money, clothes, meat, to be distributed to the necessities of saints,‡ and is employed, Rom. xv. 26, when the apostle speaks of making a certain contribution, or communication for the saints, the same is called

* Rom. vi. 19. † Col. iii. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 27. ‡ Rom. xii. 13.

διακονια, ver. 31, a service or ministration of a deacon; these offerings of love answer to the Shelamim or peace-offerings of old, which are acts of beneficence, and mutual fellowship in eating and drinking, like the love-feasts in the beginning of gospel times: thus the primitive Christians had all things common,* using hospitality at home, sending presents abroad; these are called sacrifices, though immediately relating to men, yet ultimately designed for God's sake and glory; what the believing Philippians sent to Paul of this nature, was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. iv. 18. Well, but how do God's people make a covenant by such sacrifices? I answer, by devoting themselves to God, when they distribute their property to men; and without the former the latter is insignificant; if you could give all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you have not those covenant graces of faith and love, you are nothing:† hence it is that the poor Macedonians, in their rich distributions, are commended, not only that they abounded in the riches of their liberality, 2 Cor. viii. 1—4, but there is an overplus in an act of piety also: wherein did that consist? Why, in this noble work of covenanting with God, ver. 5; "and this they did not as we hoped," that is, beyond what we could have expected, "but they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God;" they devoted not only their goods but their persons, what they were, as well as what they had; they passed a deed of gift of themselves over to God: this act of piety is an essential part and property of true charity, nor were these alone; the believing Corinthians rivalled these gracious Macedonians, 2 Cor. ix. 12, 13, as they also made a professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, as well as a liberal distribution, επι τη

* Act. ii. 44. † 1 Cor. xiii. 3

ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας, upon an obedience, or subjection, of mutual consent, as the word signifies, openly declared before the world, testifying their readiness to be at God's disposal, before many witnesses; nor, saith one, is there a more firm evidence of sincere faith, than communicating to the saints' necessities, for such a faith worketh by love:* the gift of the giver himself is better than the giver's gift, the former to God, the latter to men; the former, in some sort, consecrates the latter. Doubtless, the poor widow's two mites† amounted to a vast sum in true value, who gave not only her livelihood, but her heart and life to God; this is covenanting with God by sacrifice.

(4.) Prayer and praise, are gospel sacrifices; for prayer, see Psal. cxli. 2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening sacrifice:" so Mal. i. 11, it is prophesied, "that incense shall be offered to the name of the Lord, and a pure offering," which the new testament interprets to be prayer;‡ and for praise and thankfulness, see Heb. xiii. 15, "By him let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name;" elsewhere called, the calves of our lips,‖ because calves were offered in sacrifice. There were in the law sacrifices of thanksgiving, which were peace-offerings.§ Now in these euctical and eucharistical offerings, that is, in prayer and praise, it becomes God's people to make a covenant; prayers and vows go together; Jonah i. 16, "Then the men feared exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice, and made vows;" they had been praying and crying, ver. 14; some think that there is here an inversion, that

* Non firmius est veræ fidei specimen quàm sanctis communicare.—*Slat.*

† Mark xii. 42—44.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 8. ‖ Hos. xiv. 2. § Lev. vii. 12, 15.

being placed last, which in construction is to be first, they prayed, vowed vows and sacrifices, and it is thought these mariners became proselytes to the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Prayers and vows usually go together in scripture, but more of this hereafter. And with respect to thanksgiving, vows and covenants must be made therein; take one instance, Psal. cxvi. 12, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" he answers himself, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord," ver. 13; yea, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord," ver. 14, 17, 18. But what is that vow? surely nothing less than this personal covenanting, ver. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds." Because God had loosed his afflictive bonds, he will enter into covenant bonds; he professeth it twice to God, "Thy servant, thy servant;" new obligations bind faster.

[i.] "I am the son of thy handmaid," born in thy family, devoted by my mother to thee.

[ii.] "Thou hast loosed my bonds," I am thine by an act of special redemption, I am rescued from spiritual and corporeal slavery to be thy beads-man for ever; and when was this? even when he was offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving, then he takes into his hand the cup of salvation; it alludes to the strong wine that was poured out to the Lord for a drink-offering,* and sprinkled upon the sacrifice, in which action those who offered, called on the name of the Lord, and gave thanks; so the Hebrews say, the Levites repeat not the song of oblation, but upon the drink-offering;† so it signifies a thank-offering brought to

* Numb. xxviii. 6, 7.

† Levitæ non repetunt canticum oblationis nisi super libamen.

God in Christ. As the master of a family in a gratulatory feast, drank to all his guests in a full cup, which was called the cup of blessing or benediction, (to which our Saviour alludes in his last supper,*) whereby he testified his gratitude to his great benefactor: this is a fit season for making and renewing our solemn covenant with God; but more of this in the sequel.

Thus much for covenanting with God by sacrifice.

All these points are but preliminary, and preparatory to what I have in view—which is the character of those persons whom God charges his angels to gather to him at the great day; it is saints, none but saints, sanctified souls, these holy ones shall dwell with the holy God, holy things for holy persons.† But who are these saints? many will pretend saintship, that are not really so. But I tell you, saith God, who they are whom I account and will own for saints, it is they that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. The latter part of the text is explanatory of the former: this, this is the shibboleth, the criterion, the mark on the forehead of God's holy ones; this is the indelible character of a child of God; God will own and crown none but such at the great day; angels, the glorified souls, all the creatures will own such, and none but such as have proved their saintship by covenant relation, disposition, and conversation; and though men know it not, yet it shall be discovered when their inside shall be turned out, and the secrets of all hearts shall be discovered, then his name shall be legible on their foreheads, when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, on that illustrious day;‡ this is the brotherhood of travellers, this is the society of holy pilgrims.

Doct. That those, and only those are real saints who

Matt. xxvi. 27. † Sancta sanctis. ‡ Rev. xxii. 4. 2 Thess. i. 10.

have made a personal covenant with God, or sincere saints, who expect to be received by God, and do enter into covenant with him.

I conceive this may refer to personal covenanting.

1. Because hypocritical and sincere worshippers are distinguished in this Psalm; the former are described, challenged, convicted, threatened, and severely punished, ver. 7, 16—22; that they are thus ranked and distinguished may appear from ver. 16, "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" this adversative particle *but*, imports his setting these hypocrites in opposition to sincere covenanting saints, who "offer to God thanksgiving, and pay their vows to the Most High," ver. 14; who call on God in trouble, and glorify him ver. 15; "who order their conversation aright, and to whom he shews the salvation of God," ver. 23. O what a vast difference and disproportion there is betwixt these!

2. Because God orders that solemn day for their discrimination; gather my saints to me, saith he; graceless souls must be separated from him, with *go ye cursed*. In this world saints and sinners, sincere and hypocritical worshippers are intermingled, and resemble each other so much, that none can tell with certainty which are God's people, and which not; but there is a day coming that shall burn as an oven, which shall purge them as gold and silver, and "I will declare them to be mine," saith God, "when I make up my jewels"—"then shall ye return and discern betwixt the righteous and wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not;"* here they are huddled up in a crowd, then they shall be distinctly known. All professors attending on God's holy ordinances are enlisted

* Mal. iv. 1, 3. iii. 17, 18.

as soldiers under his banner, but God's sincere-hearted saints in a peculiar manner bind themselves unto the Lord in the sacred bond of the gospel covenant.

In speaking on this subject, I shall bring under review these seven general heads:—namely,

I. What is covenanting, and what this personal covenanting is?

II. Demonstrate the truth of this point, that personal covenanting is essential to saintship.

III. Discover what is essentially necessary in a soul that would enter into covenant personally with God?

IV. What outward circumstances may be convenient for making this engagement?

V. In what manner, or with what words a person may actually enter into the engagement, with the form of it?

VI. Objections answered.

VII. How a Christian must behave himself after he hath been thus solemnly making a covenant with God?

Then make some short application of all.

CHAP. III.

WHAT IS COVENANTING IN GENERAL? AND WHAT IS THIS PERSONAL COVENANTING?

I. WHAT is covenanting? It would be lost labour, to spend much time on this subject, which so many have treated on. I shall therefore only transiently make a few observations upon it; with respect to the

word ברית which in Hebrew signifies covenant, it imports,

1. To choose, to elect, or select.

(1.) Because a covenant, (as all elective acts are) is an act of judgment, and deliberation. Elections are not rash, but rational; not precipitant passions, but deliberate exercises of the intellectual faculties: thus a covenant must be, and is made on the decision of a well advised judgment, not upon the catch of a sudden fancy, or the hurry of violent passions.

(2.) Because in a covenant there is a choice made; first, of the persons, with whom this covenant is entered into, it is not with all, but with some peculiarly chosen. Secondly, there is a choice of the terms or conditions, upon which a covenant is made, and which must be inviolably maintained; and these terms are usually both possible and equal.

2. The word implies and imports eating and drinking freely, and cheerfully, with the persons with whom men contract and covenant. This distinguishes the nature of covenanting whereby persons are drawn into a friendly communion, and amicable correspondence; this was ordinary in old times when persons entered into league and a covenant together, they ate and drank together; so did Abraham and Abimelech, Gen. xxi. 27—32; Isaac and Abimelech, Gen. xxvi. 28—32; Laban and Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 44, 46. Thus doth God with his covenanted saints, they have fellowship together in the Lord's supper, thereby discovering mutual friendship and complacency in each other.

I shall not trouble you with the several sorts of covenant; that of friendship between God and Adam, and this new covenant of reconciliation between God and fallen man, grounded upon the covenant of redemption betwixt Father and Son; nor is ours the former

legal edition of this gospel covenant, but a later, larger, clearer dispensation of it, in this time of reformation; nor will I trouble you with the difference between promise and covenant, or how absolute promises may be called a covenant, as God's preserving Noah from the deluge, as that the world should not be drowned again;* as that Abraham should have a seed, and that they should inherit the land of Canaan;† these are called covenants. So in spiritual things, the promise of the Messiah, that Christ should come out of Abraham's loins;‡ that God would settle gospel ordinances, and bestow converting grace, Jer. xxxi. 31, 33, 34. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; though these be absolute promises, yet they are called by the name of covenant. But the covenant that I mean is a mutual stipulation between God and man, wherein God propounds and promises some blessings upon man's voluntary acceptance, and performing such and such conditions.

The covenant then is reciprocal; the gospel holds forth the terms; God promiseth to justify, pardon, accept and save such as repent, believe, and sincerely obey; man's consent to these terms completes the engagement. The word of God contains the conditional promise and grant, or act of grace, and so is called a testament, wherein glorious legacies are bequeathed to souls; but it is not a mutual covenant imparting the blessings thereof into man's bosom, till he do freely and sincerely accept of the terms propounded; still it is of free grace, and the efficacious operations of the Spirit assist man in performing his part; he that commands and requires faith, repentance, and new obedience, undertakes to work them.‖ Thus God in infinite wisdom hath linked the [*agenda*] things to be done on our part,

* Gen. vi. 18. ix. 11. † Gen. xv. 18. Gen. xvii. 19.
‡ Gen. iii. 15. Gal. iii. 8, 16. Ezek. xxxvii. 26. ‖ Heb. viii. 10.

and the [*habenda*] things to be enjoyed by us, together; when he performs the absolute promise, of writing his law in the hearts of his people, and putting his Spirit in them, &c. and then draws forth the graces of his Spirit into lively exercise; thus repentance and remission, faith and justification, obedience and salvation are connected together.

My chief business is to explain what a personal covenant is; for that, I suppose, is here meant; the persons are called saints, being scattered in all places, and ages of the world, and now to be gathered together on giving this commission. By a personal covenant, I mean, a covenant which is entered into by a man's own single person, between God and his own soul. I call it personal, to distinguish it from a twofold covenant which I find in scripture: first, social, and secondly sacramental: the former is with others; the latter is for or by others; for others as parents covenanting for their children, or by others, as children did covenant by their parents.

1. There is in scripture frequent mention made of social covenanting; and this is either, civil or sacred.

(1.) A civil or political covenant, which is a mutual compact or agreement between prince and people, binding themselves to each other by the sacred tie of a covenant, to perform the duties of their respective places: thus king David made a league with the elders of Israel in Hebron, 2 Sam. v. 3, whereby David obliged himself to rule according to God's laws, and the people promised fidelity and obedience to him: thus Jehoiada, that good old priest, made a tripartite covenant, 2 Kings xi. 17, that is,

[i.] Between the Lord and the king.

[ii.] Between the Lord on one part, and the king and the people on the other, that they should be the

Lord's people, both king and subjects, these two were religious covenants.

[iii.] Between the king also and the people, this was a civil covenant, or, as we call it, an oath of allegiance, called elsewhere the oath of God:* because, though it be made between men, and that in civil things, yet God himself interposeth as a party therein, to reward the keepers, and revenge the violaters thereof: thus we find, Ezek. xvii. 16—19, Zedekiah king of Judah had sworn fealty to the king of Babylon, as his vassal, but his rebellion was a breach of God's oath, and God's covenant, and must not pass without punishment. It is true, all may be personally involved in such a common bond; but this is not the covenant of which I am speaking.

(2.) There is a religious covenanting, social or together with others, which concerns sacred duties Godwards: and I find this course God's servants have adopted upon various occasions, sometimes under some remarkable threatenings or execution of judgments, sometimes after great decays of religion: thus, did Asa, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah,† and so it was done in the days of Ezra, and Nehemiah,‡ as scripture history acquaints us. The nature of this covenanting we find distinctly described, with the persons that entered into it, Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments —and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people." It was the whole community of Israel, consisting of many families, united in one church or commonwealth, as a theocracy; and between God and them there was a mutual declaring, professing,

* Eccl. viii. 2. † 2 Chron. xv. 12, 15. xxix. 10. xxxiv. 31, 32.
‡ Ezra x. 3. Neh. ix. 38.

owning and avouching a peculiar relation: the word is emphatical in Hebrew,* "Thou hast exalted or magnified the infinite and eternal God above all, and art solicitous to be united to him, planted in him by covenant-relation, (for the root imports the highest branch or bough of a tree,†) that thou mayest derive sap and virtue from him, thou liftest him as high as thou canst in thy estimation and affection, and he doth advance thee by way of recompence." Such a social covenanting even of cities and kingdoms in gospel times is predicted, Isa. xix. 18, "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts."—[*in jurando invocabunt Jehovam*] renouncing idols they shall solemnly call on God with most earnest protestations and obtestations of resolution to adhere to the Lord; therefore he doth not say they shall swear by, but to the Lord, which imports covenanting, or solemn dedication to the Lord; and so it is the same with vowing a vow unto the Lord, ver. 21. "So David sware unto the Lord," that is, "he vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob," Psal. cxxxii. 2, which also imports covenanting. Doubtless that notable chapter, Ezek. xxxvii. refers to gospel-days, wherein Judah and Ephraim shall be one stick in the Lord's hand, ver. 17, for God will make a covenant of peace with them, ver. 26. See Jer. l. 4, 5. I shall not now enumerate any more mutual covenantings; because this is not the subject I am to insist upon.

2. There is a sacramental covenanting, when parents covenant for their children, and children are engaged to God by their parental covenant; yea, sponsors, sureties, governors that stand obliged for those that are under their charge, as Abraham for his children, and all under his charge, was bound to give them the seal of the co-

* את יהוה האמרת. † אמיר Germen supremum in arbore.

venant, namely, circumcision, Gen. xvii. 2, 4—12, so he is the head of the covenant, or he by whom the covenant-right, was conveyed to all his natural seed, and afterwards to the spiritual seed, all Gentile believers; "for the promise (saith St. Peter, that is, the covenant-right) is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off;"* the covenant-relation continued, though the seal was changed from circumcision to baptism. And that some persons may represent others absent or future, the following text proves, Deut. v. 3, "The Lord made not the covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day," though some of them were infants, others unborn, when it was made; therefore elsewhere he causeth them all to be assembled, men, women, and children, to enter into the covenant;† hence it is, that parents keeping or breaking a covenant, hath such blessed or malignant influence on their children, Exod. xx. 5, 6. And hence it is that when a people return to God by repentance, God is said to remember his covenant with their ancestors;‡ for God folds up parents and children in the same bond of the covenant: especially whilst children, till they personally and actually renounce it when at age. As this is a personal, so it is a successional covenant, which concerneth the seed of the faithful, both in point of duty and privilege: certainly there is such a thing as federal right and relation, and consequently a federal holiness of the children of godly parents.‖

But though this covenant relation stand them in some stead, in their infant state, yet when they come to maturity they are bound to stand to the terms of this covenant, in their own persons; and this is what I call a personal covenant, whereby particular persons

* Act. ii. 39. † Deut. xxix. 10—15. xxxi. 12.
‡ Lev. xxvi. 42. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

individually and solemnly engage to devote themselves to God. And though this particular appropriation and personal application do render it so far distinct, yet for substance it is the same covenant which parents entered into for themselves in behalf of their seed; namely, the covenant of grace described in scripture, so that it is no new covenant, or another that I am pleading for, but a personal owning and accepting of the terms of the covenant of grace, which is called a taking hold of God's covenant, Isa. lvi. 4, that is, personally embracing, and faithfully performing all the conditions of this covenant with sincerity and perseverance; and this is a laying hold on eternal life;* as if it were said, this covenant is for me, this promise is mine, this happiness I reach and stretch out my heart and hand to get possession of; it is a common salvation, but O for my share in it; "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, *therefore of mine*, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am one, though chief;"† I take out my share by personal application. Suppose a man sat at dinner where there is variety of dishes; though they be common to all the guests, yet he saith there is a dish for me, not excluding others, (for christianity knows no monopolies) he makes a long arm, takes hold of it, and eats freely; thus the gracious soul takes hold of that holy covenant, puts his name into that general grant; this is personal covenanting.

Once more let me state, that this covenanting personally is initial, and then faith is plighted at the soul's first conversion to God, or renewed upon some special occasion. I exclude neither, but shall take in both afterwards.

For a general proof of this practice, and a remark-

* 1 Tim. vi. 19. † 1 Tim. i. 15.

able specimen of it, I shall once for all produce a single text, it is that extraordinary passage, Isa. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's," &c. The text may be denominated Christ's muster roll, or rather the oath of allegiance, by which our Lord's volunteers and subjects swear fealty and fidelity to their King and Captain.

(1.) "One shall say, I am the Lord's," that is, the Gentile converts shall singly and socially flock in, saying I also will be a soldier in Christ's camp, a servant in his family. Poor sinful worm, I have been a wretched wandering prodigal, have spent my patrimony in a foreign country, am brought to husks and penury, see my folly and frenzy, and at last return to my father, and though I deserve not the reception of a child, yet, Lord, make me as one of thy hired servants; the worst place in thy family is better than in princes' palaces; let me be as a retainer in thy family, let me have an interest in thy care, eat bread at thy table, be under thy discipline, and enjoy thyself, this, this is my exceeding joy, and transcendent reward.

(2.) "Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;" it is true, (saith the believing Gentile,) I am not Jacob's natural offspring, but I do so prize the gracious qualities of that ancient patriarch, that my soul longs to be like him. Oh that I could imitate him in plainness, piety, devoting myself to God, especially in wrestling with the mighty God of Jacob! this is the generation of them that seek God first, then Jacob, and unite with the genuine sons of Jacob. O happy souls that are ranked and reckoned in this holy society![*]

(3.) "Another shall subscribe with his hand, unto the Lord:" the soldiers of the Roman empire had the emperor's name written in their hands, whereby they

[*] Psal. xxiv. 5, 6.

testified their acting and fighting for him; in the same way antichrist's slaves have a mark in their right hands and foreheads,* thus declaring themselves on his side, Oh (saith the sincere convert,) for the blessed name of my dear Lord being inscribed upon my heart and hand! Would to God I were cast into the mould of the word, to receive a new impress, my soul desires to fight for him, and the scars and wounds I receive in his cause shall be as marks of my Lord Jesus, wherein I will glory;† such scars are richer than pearls: or the text alludes to the manner of ancient musters; they dictated and wrote down the soldier's name: let me be enrolled and my name be written among the living in Jerusalem.‡ I do solemnly testify under mine own handwriting, that I do belong to the Lord.‖

(4.) "And surname himself by the name of Israel:" still the believing Gentile expresseth his honourable esteem of church membership; he rejoiceth in that mark of honour, as the choicest figure in his escutcheon, of greater value than ever Alexander gained by his splendid exploits. The word elsewhere signifies flattering titles, and honorary appellations:§ but if I may choose my title, saith the convert, I would be called an Israelite: O that I were indeed a prince with God!¶ Would to God I were "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile?"** I know "they are not all Israel, that are of Israel;"†† there is a sort of blasphemy of some, "that say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan."‡‡ God deliver me from that criminal arrogance, to take to myself a title that appertains not to me. The name,

* Rev. xiii. 16. † Gal. vi. 14, 17. ‡ Isa. iv. 3.

‖ Syngrapho manu propria exarato testabitur se Domini esse. —*Pol.*

§ כנה Titulum honorificum significat.

¶ Gen. xxxii. 28. ** John i. 47.

†† Rom. ix. 6. ‡‡ Rev. ii. 9.

Christian, is a title of honour, and however at Rome among Pseudo-Christians it may be a name of reproach, and used for fool or dolt, would to God I had a principle to bear it out, and a practice to honour, and not to blemish this worthy title. May some precious ointment drop down from Christ our head, and new-testament Aaron, let it run down to me, even to me, the lowest skirts of his garment,* that I may be sanctified with the nature, as well as dignified with the name of Christ: this new name shall be my greatest honour, and this divine nature shall be my greatest comfort.

CHAP. IV.

INSTANCES OF THIS PRACTICE OF PERSONAL COVENANTING, AND REASONS FOR IT.

II. What I shall next insist upon is the proof of this proposition—that personal covenanting is essential to saintship; that those, and only those are real saints, who make a personal covenant with God.

Understand that I am here speaking, in the first place, of a real, sincere, and upright saint, a regenerate soul, thoroughly sanctified, not one that is accounted so by men only, but by God here, and who will be accounted so at the last solemn day, not nominally, but really a saint. And secondly, we are considering him here in his personal, not relative capacity; though it cannot be denied that a saint's personal covenanting is not without special influence upon his posterity also, Isa. lix. 21, and whether that text, Ezek. xvi. 61, "but not

* Psal. cxxxiii. 2

by thy covenant;" mean that the Gentiles must be understood as being only under the old covenant, which was violated, or not by thy own covenant, that is, only redounding to thine own advantage, but thine shall fare better by it; and observe it, the more public any person is, the more persons will be interested; as when a magistrate, or minister, others have the benefit of their example and influence; yea, though the Christian do this work in secret and privately, by himself alone, yet others are concerned therein; as when Jacob in a solitary place, at one time, covenanted with God, at another time, wrestled with God, yet these acts had respect to the whole church of God for many generations: so saith that text, Hos. xii. 4, "he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us." Jacob's offspring was much interested in those peculiar passages betwixt God and their pious ancestor many hundred years before. This may be an encouragement to do it, who knows who may be better by it? And even in more solemn, public covenants with God wherein we unite with others, which is that way of covenanting most taken notice of in scripture, yet a man doth nothing except he make personal application; as in all public ordinances, when we join with others, we must improve them for our own personal benefit, so in covenanting with others, our own case must first be regarded. But I confess I have found it difficult to find examples of this private personal covenanting with God; yet some I shall mention. My proof of this point then consists of two sorts of arguments, namely, instances, and logical conclusions; the former prove the fact, the latter show the reasons of the fact or obligation.

In commencing with instances, I shall briefly select witnesses to prove this truth.

1. Adam. He being created a perfect creature, while

he continued in friendship with God, according to the first covenant of amity, all was well; but violating that, he was expelled paradise. God however revealing to him the new covenant, we may charitably believe he personally closed with it, though not as a public person, as in the former, yet for himself at least in his private capacity; for whereas God in justice might have found him out, and struck him dead, according to his threatening, yet he makes an inquiry after his fallen creature, not to condemn him at the tribunal of justice, but to alarm his conscience under guilt, and convince him of his need of a mediator; and God shews him the city of refuge, the horns of the altar, "the seed of the woman that breaks the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. Expositors say,* that the 14th verse denounceth the punishment of the instrument, the literal serpent, this of the devil, the mystical serpent: doubtless the Messiah is that seed of the woman, and though his heel was bruised in his passion and death, yet "by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil."† This is the plain English of that primitive prophecy, which we may rationally conclude Adam embraced, for

(1.) His life was protracted nine hundred and thirty years,‡ and this suspending of the threatened punishment of death was only through Christ.

(2.) When Adam was terrified in his conscience for sin, and beaten out of all his holds, he had no way to flee but to the promised Messiah ;‖ then was the gospel welcome to his guilty soul.

(3.) Some think that God's walking in the garden in the cool, or gentle breathing air of the day,§ opposed to the heat of the day, doth signify that now God begins to be appeased towards man, through his Son's

* Vid. Pol. Crit. in loc. † Heb. ii. 14.
‡ Gen. v. 5. ‖ Gen. iii. 8. Gal. iii. 22, 24.
§ Gen. iii. 8. רוח היום Ad auram vel ventum Diei.

undertaking, whereby man's scorched conscience was sweetly refreshed, as well as divine wrath pacified; and this by the blessed blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,* to be poured out in the evening of the world.

(4.) Adam called his wife's name Eve, or Hevah, because she was the mother of all living: this speaks Adam's faith, that though they were condemned, and so dead in law, yet they should live and produce a living offspring, yea the promised seed; therefore he calls her Hevah,† not only a living woman, but life-giving woman, from whom the life-giving Redeemer should spring to give saving life to the world; for the second Adam is made a quickening Spirit, ‡ and it is probable that Adam offered sacrifice, in testimony of his faith in the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God; the beasts' skins, and his sons sacrificing, demonstrate his doing it.‖ Yea further, we have grounds to believe that Eve herself believed in Christ, and renewed her covenant personally with God, for she calls her son Seth, Gen. iv. 25, this she spoke anticipating the Messiah. The Hebrews think that Adam and Eve came not together, but spent some years in bitter lamentation for their fall and expulsion, and at last came together for procreation, and called their son Seth, put or placed as a foundation,§ that is, of the church of God, a figure of Christ the true foundation:¶ for the patriarchs imposed names on children, as monuments of divine benefits, and arguments of faith: God saith she hath appointed me another seed; doubtless, this other seed refers to Christ, the promised seed:** and should any

* Gen. xviii. 1. † Gen. iii. 20.
‡ חוה vivificatricem. Rom. v. 17. 1 Cor. xv. 45.
‖ Gen. iii. 21. iv. 3, 4. § 1 Cor. iii. 11.
¶ Isa. xxviii. 16. ** Gal. iii. 16.

now despair, if Adam and Eve who opened the floodgates of sin and misery, had the door of salvation opened to them by Christ, and embraced him in the new covenant, and were justified, and saved! O astonishing act of gospel grace in the morning of the world!

2. Enoch is the next instance of one that made a personal covenant, Gen. v. 22, 24; it is said twice that Enoch walked with God; the words are very emphatical, and signify,

(1.) He urged, persuaded, and caused himself to walk with God;* he found his perverse heart drawing back, and turning aside, and therefore excited himself, and brought his wandering spirit back to the exercise. saying as David, "My soul wait thou only upon God." †

(2.) The word signifies, he drew or brought himself to God,‡ or he delivered himself over to God, that is, by covenant, engaging his heart wholly to be the Lord's.

(3.) He adhered more closely, familiarly, and intimately to the Lord;|| there might be some sincerely religious, but Enoch exceeded them all, he bound himself more strictly to the Lord, in the bonds of union and intimate communion with his Maker.

(4.) He walked continually before, or with the Lord, or according to the Lord,§ that is, setting the Lord always before him, regulating his life always by God's will and pleasure, whether it was in the office of the public ministry, as walking before God doth elsewhere import,¶ or in a private capacity; in both he bound himself close to God, and faithfully discharged his duty

* Ambulare se fecit. † Psal. lxii. 5. ‡ Deduxit se ad Deum.
|| Arctius et familiarius Deo inhæsit.
§ Ambulavit indesinenter cum Domino, *or*, secundum Deum.
¶ 1 Sam. ii. 30, 35.

O how careful was this good man in his conversation! how fearful of missing his duty! therefore he entered into solemn covenant with the Lord, lest by force or flattery, by Satan's temptations, or corrupt examples, he should be drawn away from God in that evil day; all this was by faith, saith the apostle;* and so he pleased God, and was translated to heaven immediately and early, when he had but arrived to the third part of the age of others; God was pleased early to take him out of the world, as one of whom the world was not worthy. The Hebrews say, though Enoch was a good man, yet he had strong inclinations to evil, therefore he bound himself the more closely to God, and God snatched him from this polluting and ensnaring world, lest his honest purposes should be changed; but however, Enoch leaped over the formidable ditch of death by a singular privilege of translation: this was a covenanting soul on earth, and now a crowned saint in heaven.

3. Noah entered into a personal covenant with God: he had Lamech for his father, Methuselah was his grandfather, Enoch his great grandfather, and he walked in his pious ancestor's steps. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God, Gen. vi. 9: just in point of actions, perfect in point of inward integrity. Noah was eminent for his faith, and he dared to be good in a bad time, when all flesh had corrupted its way:† how came this? Why, next to the grace of God enabling him, his own covenanting with God fortified him against infection and opposition; and this is the first express mention of a covenant between God and man after the fall, Gen. vi. 18, "With thee will I establish my covenant," which doubtless was reciprocal, for Gen. viii. 20, 21, "Noah built an altar

* Heb. xi. 5. † Heb. xi. 7. Gen. vi. 12.

to the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings,—and the Lord smelt a sweet savour." Noah made a covenant with God by this sacrifice; God's wrath was appeased, mercy promised, his person accepted through Christ the mediator of the covenant, whom Noah saw in the rainbow; for though it was fixed as a token that the world should be no more drowned with water,* yet Noah by faith looked beyond that, to God, as his covenant God, through the rainbow which was round about the throne, and which is said to be in sight like unto an emerald;† importing that God in his judgments is ever mindful of his covenant, and is approachable by his saints through our mediator. The emerald is of a green colour, which is most grateful to the eyes; surely there is no such glorious sight as God in covenant with poor sinful souls through Christ; his covenant is always fresh and green, it never decays, but is ever new, firm and flourishing. Noah signifies rest, and in him was the charter of dominion and propagation again renewed,‡ in him was the curse removed from the earth, and the ruins of the old world repaired; and still in after-times there was a reference to this covenant between God and Noah, Isa. liv. 9, 10. Ezek. i. last.

4. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was called out of his own country, to whom God promised that Christ should come out of his loins, for so the apostle interprets that promise, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed:"‖ Abraham complied with the divine call by an unparalleled self-resignation to the divine pleasure; putting his hand into God's, he went blindfold, not knowing whither he went,§ only he knew God led him, and that satisfied Abraham. This was a

* Gen. ix. 12, 13. † Rev. iv. 3. ‡ Gen. ix. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 20.
‖ Gen. xii. 3. Act. iii. 25. Gal. iii. 16. § Heb. xi. 8.

personal intercourse between God and his soul, for another text saith, "I called him alone, and blessed, and increased him,"* that is, either him only, and no others of his kindred with him, or when he had no offspring, or "I withdrew him out of company into a solitary place, and there we covenanted together:" we consider this famous patriarch here, not as the head of the covenanted party, who are called children of Abraham, but as to his personal covenanting with God for his own soul: thus God renewed his covenant with him after that Lot was separated from him; both to signify approbation of Abraham's peaceable spirit, and as an evidence of sweetest converse between God and his saints in solitude. Abraham echoed back in reciprocal acts of faith in the Messiah to come, for he saw Christ's day and rejoiced,† and he resigned up himself and family to God, by complying with his command, in going to sacrifice his only son.‡ Two notable evidences of personal consent; heroic actings of a lively faith, that like a mighty torrent, bore down all difficulties to flesh and blood, for which he is renowned through all generations.

5. Isaac may not be left out in this sacred catalogue of covenanting souls; who, as he was circumcised, and instructed by Abraham in a personal closing with the covenant at full age for himself, so doubtless did he engage in it sincerely and secretly: what Isaac was doing when Ishmael mocked him,‖ I know not, but the scripture testifies he was born after the Spirit;§ and who can tell but he might be about such an affair, when he went out into the fields to meditate:¶ certainly it was either to covenant with God or to converse with his covenant God, by prayer, meditation, and holy ejaculations.

* Isa. li. 2. † John viii. 56. ‡ Gen. xxii. 9, 10.
‖ Gen. xxi. 9. § Gal. iv. 29. ¶ Gen. xxiv. 63.

And after the death of his father Abraham, God renewed his covenant with Isaac, and gave him the blessing thereof; and told him he would perform the oath which he sware to Abraham:* God appears again to him, and saith, Fear not for I am with thee; and no doubt but Isaac still consented, for the text saith, "He built an altar there, and called on the name of the Lord,"† wherein he renewed his covenant by sacrifice.

6. Jacob is a remarkable instance of personal covenanting with God; see the history of it in the 28th chapter of Genesis; here we find his father Isaac sending him forth with a blessing, though destitute of worldly wealth: Jacob obeyed, and travelled a solitary journey, in a wilderness way, but had God's presence, he renews his covenant, sets up a stone of remembrance, and echoes back to God in renewed vows; this was a personal covenanting, wherein,

(1.) Above all things, he desires that God may be his God, ver. 20, 21, which, though it be expressed conditionally, yet is not to be understood, as though God should not be his God, if he did not these things for him; but to shew the ardency of his affection, and his abundant satisfaction with a small pittance, bread and raiment upon condition that God may be his God; his heart was intently set upon a stricter bond of obligation between God and himself and he will gladly catch at any occasion to make the engagement closer.

(2.) Here is his self-dedication to God, so it may be read, *seeing God will be with me,—then shall the Lord be my God—and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house, &c.* Observe, he doth not here engage to perform moral duties, or to employ himself in the exercise of internal graces, for with respect to these he had formally engaged himself, (though

* Gen. xxv. 11. xxvi. 3, 4. † Gen. xxvi. 24, 25.

doubtless he implies these,) but more special acts of service for God, as dedication of a place, paying tithes to God, that is, either to Melchizedeck, the priest of the most high God, or to the priests that might officiate, or to the poor, or to God in sacrifice; however, as God is the donor and owner of all he had, so he will lay it at God's feet, and bestow it according to his order; for now he hath afresh resolved and covenanted that all he hath, is, or doth, shall be the Lord's, and for his glory; here is a very solemn covenanter.

7. Joseph, Jacob's son, is another instance, who followed his father's steps in youthful troubles; also in owning the God of his fathers, pious Joseph had certainly been devoting himself to God, and had resolved to please him, whoever was displeased, when his heart was so knit to God, that he said, "How shall I do this wickedness and sin against God?"* and God was with him, as his covenant God. But a more express covenanting is held forth, Gen. xlvii. 29, 31, where his dying father Jacob makes his beloved Joseph swear, by the significant form of putting his hand under his father's thigh: although this was but a particular concern, and of a civil nature, yet there seems to be a two-fold acting of faith, both in Jacob and Joseph.

(1.) The putting his hand under his father's thigh, was not only a token of homage and reverence to his dying father, nor only relating to a posterity, but chiefly as it was a sign of the covenant, and circumcision the seal thereof, as if he had said, let this engagement be as firm as that of the covenant of circumcision;† or as I hope, for the blessed seed which shall spring out of thy loins, or thigh; in him do I believe, by him do I swear, who is God, blessed for ever. Thus pious Joseph, (who himself was a type of Christ,) expressed

* Gen. xxxix. 3, 9. † Gen. xxiv. 2.

his personal faith in him, and covenanted with God through him.

(2.) He promised to carry his father's bones into Canaan, to be buried, which Joseph did faithfully and literally perform;* but that was not all, for he took an oath of his brethren, that they should carry his bones thither also, which the apostle saith, "was an act of faith,"† not so much in temporal as in spiritual things, for hereby he,

[i.] Reflected upon the covenant which God had made and so oft repeated to his ancestors, and believed God's performance thereof, and his own share therein.

[ii.] He believed that Jesus Christ, the son of God, was there to be born, walk, teach, converse, work miracles, die, rise again, and that he hoped also to rise with him, as a member of his body.

[iii.] He hoped that his posterity coming to Canaan would be quickened, by beholding the monuments of their fathers, to acknowledge God's faithfulness, and imitate their parents' piety.

[iv.] They looked on Canaan as a type of heaven, and so drew off their hearts from this lower region to heavenly mansions; their affections must be mortified too, as their bodies were buried in the earthly Canaan; as this burial was a pledge of future possessions, so their faith was raised to higher expectations; their bodies were in the earthly, their souls in the heavenly Canaan: this was the proper object of Joseph's faith;‡ he embraced Christ when he put his hand under his father's thigh, swearing himself to be the Lord's, and professing his resolution to be a holy pilgrim, travelling to the new Jerusalem.

8. Moses is another celebrated precedent of personal covenanting; and though the Old Testament does not

* Gen. l. 5, 13. † Heb. xi. 22. ‡ Heb. xi. 13—16.

present to us an historical account of any such transaction, yet it is most succinctly couched in that remarkable chapter, in which the apostle gives us a description of this distinguished man of God, Heb. xi. 23—29. As this king in Jeshurun brought the political body of Israel into covenant with God; so there are in that chapter two notable demonstrations of his entering into personal covenant with God, on the behalf of his own soul :—

(1.) Here is his negative act of abnegation or renouncing of himself, and of all the world—" he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ;" worldly grandeur was small in this holy man's eyes. Josephus saith, that Thermuthis, Pharaoh's daughter, said to her father, " I have determined to adopt Moses for my son, to be my successor in the kingdom." But Moses in his infancy, is said to have given a presage of his noble spirit, for when the king in jest put the crown on his head, he scornfully cast it down to the ground, nor was this a mere childish act, but by instinct from heaven, for he confirmed it when at age, when he was old* enough to make a deliberate choice, ver. 24,—the passage saith, come to years; he did it not out of childish levity, but upon mature consideration, and the result of his sober thoughts was, that he would rather be the meanest in God's church, than king of Egypt; farewell honours, crowns, sceptres, for his dear Lord.

(2.) Here is the positive part, his voluntary election —" choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," that is, to be banished from the court for conscience' sake: a strange choice, to prefer disgrace to honour, pain to pleasure, poverty to riches: was the man mad? so he would be considered by ambitious gallants now-a-days; but he knew what he did.

* Μέγας, great.

[i.] The people of God were better companions than heathens.

[ii.] The pleasures of godliness were better than the pleasures of sin.

[iii.] Sublunary things are but temporary, divine comforts have no end.

[iv.] The worst of Christ, namely, reproach, is better than the best of the world, the highest riches.

[v.] The recompence of reward to which he had respect, counterbalanced earthly enjoyments.

[vi.] The displeasure of his heavenly Father, was of greater consequence than the wrath of all the kings of the earth.

[vii.] His eyes were fixed on him who was invisible, therefore visible dangers were nothing to him. Faith helps to such discoveries as sense and reason are strangers to; he had also faith in a mediator, whom himself typified; "for through faith he kept the passover, and sprinkling of blood," Heb. xi. 28; his own faith was the hyssop that sprinkled the blood on his soul,* and so he was secured, and as a confirmation of this covenant relation, both Moses and all Israel passed through the Red Sea, as upon dry ground,† ver. 29; Moses's faith in God's omnipotence, made a bridge through the vast ocean; and this passage of the Red Sea was an extraordinary sacrament to Israel, for they were all baptized unto or by Moses, as typical mediator, in the cloud and in the sea:‡ thus good Moses covenanted, and God accepted him, and the people; but Moses's personal choice and covenant is the thing on which I insist.

9. Job saith, chap. xxxi. 1, "I made a covenant with mine eyes, why then should I think upon a maid?" Though this refer only to a particular engagement with reference to himself, against impure inclinations;

* Exod. xii. 22. † Exod. xiv. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 2.

yet certainly it hath a reference to this solemn dedication of himself to God: because,

(1.) His heart and thoughts were concerned therein.

(2.) Because it extends to all other sins and duties, as the context declares; for Job was a universal cultivator of piety, and covenanter for duty; and all that he did or expected was by faith in a mediator: "I know" saith he, "that my Redeemer liveth,"* which words Job would have to be written, yea, printed in a book, yea, graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock for ever. He had a particular interest in his Goel or kinsman, who had a right to redeem him, and his Redeemer had a peculiar care of him; as the Lord of life takes hold of his flesh by incarnation, so he takes hold on Christ by a particular application; this is personal covenanting.

10. David shall be the next, who frequently renewed his vows and covenants with God, Psal. cxix. 48, "My hands also will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved;" this gesture of lifting up the hands sometimes imports prayer, or blessing, yet here it imports,

(1.) Covenanting.

(2.) Vigorous acting accordingly; Abraham saith, "I have lift up my hand, that is, sworn to the Lord,"† so lifting up the hand is the posture of a man entering into action shaking off sloth and listlessness; also lifting up the hands that hang down, is opposed to discouragement;‡ so David, first by covenant engageth himself, then sets himself to the performance of his vow with great resolution; more plainly he saith, "I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," ver. 106, this oath is a solemn vow by personal covenanting to act in compliance with the will

* Job xix. 23—25. † Gen. xiv. 22. Exod. vi. 6.
‡ 2 Chron. xv. 7. Heb. xii. 12.

of God; and he engageth the Lord to be surety for him in performing it, ver. 122.

11. Peter is the next instance, Matt. xvi. 16, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" this is not a bare profession of his faith, but a solemn owning his Lord as the true Messiah, and his Saviour, expecting salvation by him, and resigning up himself to his conduct, according to his method of saving sinners, which is clear by comparing this with Matt. xix. 27, "We have forsaken all and followed thee," which expresses the terms of the new covenant, renouncing all and owning Christ only; and elsewhere he saith, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; we are sure, and believe, that thou art Christ the Son of the living God:"* thus Peter, as the other apostles did, resigned up himself to Jesus as his Saviour and Sovereign.

12. Thomas, poor doubting Thomas, shall be the last instance of a soul's personal covenanting; who, though he staggered in his belief of Christ's resurrection, yet upon Christ's gracious condescension to gratify his senses, cried out as in a transport of faith and affection, "My Lord, and my God," John xx. 28; as if he had said, Lord I doubted thy divinity in questioning thy power to raise thyself, I denied the great work of redemption, "for if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins,"† but now I am not only satisfied respecting the truth of thy deity, and satisfaction to justice, but I do solemnly own thee in covenant-relation, giving up myself to thee, as entirely thine, taking thee to be my Lord, to rule me by thy word and Spirit; thine I am, and thou art mine, my God in covenant, my Lord and Saviour to order me as thou pleasest; my portion to satisfy me, my patron to defend me, my light

* John vi. 68, 69. † 1 Cor. xv. 17.

to conduct me, my life to crown me; thee I would enjoy, and in the enjoyment of thee I expect my only felicity, in this and in another world.

And what shall I further say? for the time would fail me to mention all the saints in scripture, that have made a personal covenant with God, directly or consequentially, expressly or implicitly. The virgin Mary saith, "My spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour."* Zacharias also, the father of John Baptist, expresseth his faith in Christ,† according to the ancient covenant with their fathers. Old Simeon was content to die with the child Jesus in the arms of his body, and Messiah in the arms of his faith:‡ but this blessed jury of covenanted souls may suffice to bring in their verdict, to confirm this truth, that real saints have been wont to enter into a personal covenant with God.

CHAP. V.

ARGUMENTS PRODUCED FOR CONFIRMATION OF THE DOCTRINE.

THUS we have presented some scripture instances to clear the point; I shall subjoin also some logical arguments to prove, that those, and those only are real saints that make a personal covenant with God; and these I shall propound syllogistically.

First argument I frame from natural religion, thus:

That which the acknowledged principles of natural religion prompt to, must needs go to the constituting of a saint.

* Luke i. 47. † Luke i. 70—72. Luke ii. 28, 29.

But the very principles of natural religion do prompt men to a personal covenanting with God.

Therefore personal covenanting with God must go to the constituting of a saint.

The major proposition is clear of itself, for Christianity doth not destroy, but suppose and build upon principles of natural religion; natural religion is (in some sense) the test and touchstone of the truth of any religion, and Christianity doth so fully harmonize with it, that the sacred writers oft appeal to it, and approve or disapprove any thing according as it is consonant or contrary to principles of nature. "Judge in yourselves,"* saith Paul, that is, as you are men endued with reason, —and doth not nature itself teach you?—that is, as common custom hath made the wearing of hair at length, the distinction of the female sex, so nature itself will tell you that it is a shame for a man to appear thus like a woman: confusion of sexes is against nature; and therefore the apostle saith, "That heathens do by nature the things contained in the law,"† that is, many things materially good: and unnatural sins are the worst of all sins;‡ whether these common sentiments,‖ universally owned by all mankind be the relics of God's image in man, or superadded by God's providence for the benefit of mankind I dispute not; but that there are such, all acknowledge who can distinguish between moral good and evil, and though some high points in Christianity be above the dim moonlight of nature, yet there is nothing contrary to those discoveries in the gospel revelation.

And for the minor, namely, that personal covenanting with God is some way consonant to natural religion, might easily be demonstrated, not only as the learned

* 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14.

† Rom. ii. 14.

‡ Rom. i. 26, 27, 32. 2 Tim. iii. 3.

‖ Κοίναι ἔννοιαι.

philosophers improved right reason,* by study and virtuous living; but as there is something of this description engraven on man's heart by nature, and continues there, if not obliterated by vicious practices, as,

1. That there is a supreme Being, Lord and giver of all, author of all good, benefactor to all creatures, judge of the rational and intellectual world. Reason tells man, he hath not his being of himself, but is indebted to, and dependant on a first cause, that is God only.

2. That God can be but one, for the first cause doth eminently comprise all its effects, and yet must be more excellent than the effects; this can be no less than infinite, and there cannot be two infinites, so there is but one God, which Socrates asserted, and died for maintaining.

3. That some worship and service is due to this one infinite Being, or God, for immediate obligation doth naturally result from this relation betwixt the maker and the creature.

4. That this supreme Being is man's chief good and utmost end, and must be chosen as such, and that man is to dedicate himself freely to him, in order to the discharge of his duty, and enjoyment of felicity in him, and that all this is most highly rational; for what can be more natural, than that the rivers run into that ocean from whence they had their rise? and that the laden boughs should bend down to the earth, by which the tree is nourished? much more in such a voluntary agent as man is; nature will prompt this portion of gratitude, to bring back a man's self into the bosom of that God from whom he had his being, both to please and enjoy him: this is the first, most necessary, and excellent service of God, presenting ourselves to God,

* Λόγον ὀρθὸν.

which the apostle calls reasonable service;* for it is most agreeable to the rational principles of natural religion. Supposing that there is a God, it follows by undeniable consequence, that intelligent spirits should devote themselves to God by humble adoration of him, ardent love to him, reliance on him, obedience to him, expectation of rewards from him, aspiring to be like him, to have the fruition of him, and acting in every thing for his honour and glory; and all this cannot be done by proxy, because the relation is their own, and so the obligation lies on themselves, which they cannot devolve upon others; and what is this but the personal covenanting which I am describing? This is the first and most irrefragable argument, and cannot be resisted by any but him who hath divested himself of man, and may be justly branded as a brute and traitor to the universe, and God of nature.

The second argument is thus framed:—

That which is essentially necessary in the practical part of christianity is required to saintship.

But personal covenanting with God is essentially necessary in the practical part of christianity.

Therefore personal covenanting with God is absolutely and indispensably required to real saintship.

I need not stand long to prove the first proposition, for the owning of the christian religion doth denominate a man to be a Christian; and to be a Christian is all one as to be a saint, for these are synonymous phrases. Sometimes professors of the christian religion are called brethren, elsewhere faithful, likewise believers,† disciples, and they were called Christians first at Antioch,‡ the word χρηματίσαι, which is used, critics say,‖ imports

* Rom. xii. 1. † Acts v. 14. ‡ Acts xi. 26.

‖ Ἐχρημάτισεν ἑαυτὸν, i. e. adscripsit se dominationis juri vel privilegiis et immunitatibus.

committing authority to some to impose names, rules, terms, and accordingly devoting a man's self to his rules of government, and consequently enjoying the privileges and immunities thereto annexed. Thus the Christian, who is truly worthy of that honourable title, doth indeed own the Lord Jesus as the absolute Lord and Sovereign of his church, the great Legislator, and committeth, resigneth, and devoteth himself to him, to be taught, ruled, and ordered by him; and such as as these are elsewhere said to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. * To be a Christian then is to own the revealed principles of the christian religion, to devote a man's self to God, to be a sincere follower of Christ, and to resolve upon, and to perform universal, cordial, and constant obedience to his commands: thus the several sects of philosophers were called Pythagoreans, Platonists, Aristotelians, Epicureans, because they embraced the systems of particular philosophers, to whom they subjected themselves as their masters and leaders; but no man on earth is to be called father, rabbi or master, to make him absolute lord of conscience, but Christ alone. †

And for the minor, it is apparent that personal covenanting with God is absolutely, essentially and indispensably necessary in the practical part of christianity; that is, that no man can be a right Christian, and can enjoy the privileges purchased by Christ, except he bind himself to God by personal covenant. The christian religion contains propositions or truths to be believed, precepts or duties to be practised, promises or rewards to be enjoyed; all these are linked together by an indissoluble bond. It is in vain to expect the benefits, without a due performance of the conditions. Privileges offered require a disposition capable of reception,

* 1 Cor. i. 2. † Matt. xxiii. 8—10.

and personal appropriation. The sum of the gospel consists in these things:—namely, in general, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,* that is, when God and man were set at a distance by sin, the righteous God being engaged to avenge himself on rebel-man, Christ the Son of God, a person of infinite worth, did interpose as mediator, took upon him human nature, endured sufferings of infinite weight, to free sinners from infinite wrath, and to restore them to eternal favour with God, and immediate enjoyment of him in heaven; and all this tendered to man in the most taking manner, upon easy and honourable terms, with the greatest security imaginable, and with threats of greatest severity to such as reject this kindness. This is the sum and substance of our Christian religion, and surely doth imply man's voluntary casting down his weapons, submitting to God's terms, and so coming to be at peace and friendship with God in God's way: and what is this but personal covenanting? God's willingness is fully declared in the holy Scriptures, if man unfeignedly consent, the agreement is made. This covenanting then is the life and marrow of religion, so far as concerns particular souls, for no man breathing can expect any share in a general pardon, except his name be found inserted in the instrument conveying it. The whole tenor of the gospel imports thus much. A conditional grant requires the performance of the condition, in order to the enjoyment of privileges: but of this before.

The third argument is derived from the nature and necessity of faith; and thus I argue:—

That which includeth the fundamental grace of faith, is necessary to the constitution of a saint.

But personal covenanting includeth the grace of faith, saving, justifying faith.

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Therefore personal covenanting is necessary to the being or constitution of a saint.

The major is clear of itself, that faith is a fundamental grace, and absolutely necessary to the being or constituting of a saint. Faith towards God is one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, or the word of the beginning of Christ; it unites the soul to him, "Christ dwells in the heart by faith, ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and without faith it is impossible to please God;" it is as impossible to be a saint without faith, as to be a man without a soul, for faith purifies the heart, it sanctifies, it justifies, faith saveth, I mean such a faith as worketh by love.* The whole tenor of the gospel proves this, that there is no saintship without faith.

And that personal covenanting implieth and includeth this grace of faith is as clear; for what is believing but accepting Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, and our God in Christ, and receiving Jesus Christ as prophet, priest, and king?† and a dedicating or devoting of ourselves wholly to God to be ruled and guided by him, and saved in his own way? Faith is not only an assent of the understanding to divine truths, that is too low, nor is it an assurance that Christ died for me, that is too high a description of it; but it is a consent of the will, embracing Christ in a promise, and so justifies and saves, whether as an instrument apprehending Christ, or as a condition of the covenant, or both, I dispute not; all agree in the necessity, most in the nature of true justifying faith, which is to make particular application and personal appropriation of Christ, and the good things of the gospel. Faith doth

* Heb. vi. 1. Eph. iii. 17. Gal. iii. 26. Heb. xi. 6. Acts xv. 9. xxvi. 18. Rom. iv. 5. Eph. ii. 8. Gal. v. 6.

† John i. 12.

make spiritual privileges a man's own;* a man must have faith of his own, "The just shall live by faith," † then promises are his own; a personal faith is necessary to a personal title, and this is the same with personal covenanting, which appears to be necessary to the constitution of a saint.

Fourth argument.

That which is the proper fruit of Christ's purchase, is necessary to the constituting of a saint.

But personal covenanting is the proper fruit of Christ's purchase.

Therefore personal covenanting with God is necessary to constitute a saint.

The major is undeniable; for the application of Christ's purchase is necessary to the being of a Christian, whether by way of imputation, or communication. "I desire," saith the apostle, "to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified." ‡ The whole body of christianity is (as I may say,) strained into this quintessential extract—to know Christ, that is, practically, experimentally feel, taste, and improve:‖—

1. The power of his resurrection, that is, as that is the exemplary cause of our spiritual and corporal resurrection.

2. The fellowship of his sufferings, by mortification of the flesh, and bearing the cross.

3. Being made conformable unto his death, that is, if I have the benefit of his sufferings by imputation, he will convey mortifying and vivifying grace to enable me to follow Christ my Lord through martyrdom to heaven, if he call me to it; and indeed, the life of religion consists in participation of the benefits of Christ's undertakings, by justification, and by deriving virtue from him to crucify the flesh, to live to right-

* Ἰδιοποιῆσθαι. † Hab. ii. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2. ‖ Phil. iii. 10.

eousness, and to follow him through sufferings to heaven. No man can be truly said to be a Christian, but he that partakes of the blessings of Christ's purchase, such as reconciliation, justification, adoption, sanctification, donation of the Spirit, and eternal salvation; these are such privileges as are absolutely necessary to the being of a saint.

And that personal covenanting is a fruit of Christ's purchase, yea and the only way to enjoy benefit by the former privileges, is also clear from many scriptures, Rom. xiv. 7—9; the two former verses express the Christian's absolute devotedness to God, "whether we live or die we are the Lord's," that is, absolutely dedicated to the Lord, by a personal covenant, and why so? how comes this to pass? why ver. 9, tells us, "for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," Christ's dominion, and a Christian's relation extending not only to this life but the other. And our relation to God is founded on redemption; "he died, and gave himself for us, to purify to himself a peculiar people."* Christians are bought with a price, that they may, by devoting all to him, glorify God in soul and body which are his.† The redeemed saint doth actually give up himself to the Lord upon these terms, which are judged highly rational, so saith the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge;" observe it, love draws the affections, and the reasonableness of it convinceth the judgment, "that if one died for all, then were all dead," he finds us dead in Adam, and makes us die to sin by grace; "and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him which died for them." Christ became like us, that we

* Titus ii. 14. † 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

may be conformed to him; he was given up for us, that we may be given to him; yea, he gives himself to us, and it is just that we receive him, and give up ourselves to him. And indeed if Christians be Christ's purchase, it is fit he should have possession of them; a right to us is not available, without a right in us; the efficacy of his Spirit seconds the virtue of his merit; the Holy Ghost bows the will to give consent to enter this covenant; and this is the fruit of Christ's purchase: thus personal covenanting is essential to a saint.

Fifth argument is formed from the vow in baptism, thus:—

That which persons are obliged to by baptism is essential to constitute a saint.

But personal covenanting is that to which all are obliged by baptism.

Therefore personal covenanting is essentially necessary in the constitution of a saint.

For the first proposition, that that to which persons are obliged by baptism doth really constitute a saint; this is apparent, for our baptism, (of which we are generally partakers in infancy,) is that sacramental act instituted by Christ for the solemnizing of the covenant of christianity, between God and man, and the solemn investing of us in that blessed relation, obliging us to become his devoted servants, obedient subjects, and faithful soldiers. Baptism is taking enlisting-money to be the Lord's, and as it invests us in the privileges, so it binds us to the duties of Christians: thus the whole covenant is contained in baptism, mercy on God's part, duty on ours; the words of the institution comprehend this dedication to God, Matt. xxviii. 19, "Baptizing them in, or into, the name of the Father," that is, owning God as creator, preserver, rector, benefactor, father, and author, and object of our happiness:

"of the Son," that is, taking Christ as our Saviour, redeemer, head, husband, teacher of us, sovereign over us, intercessor for us: "and of the Holy Ghost," that is, entertaining him, subjecting ourselves to the illuminating, sanctifying, quickening Spirit of light, love, and holy life, consenting to be the Lord's, repenting of sin, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh; this is the baptismal covenant, and no less goes to make a true Christian.

And that all who are baptized are obliged to be the Lord's by covenant, not only in infancy, but also to enter into personal covenant with God at years of discretion, may be easily proved; some say that baptism brings that general law of grace or conditional promise, "He that believeth shall be saved,"* into an actual mutual covenant, upon man's consent; for the Lord by his minister in that seal stipulates, that is, he demands of the party baptized, whether he sincerely consent on his part, and upon supposition he doth, he delivers the covenant-gifts to him or his, which are at present conferred, so far as the ordinance extends; if the baptized be an infant, and die so, there are rational grounds to believe its state safe; if it continue to maturity, the particular application is made upon personal covenanting; therefore children must be instructed in the use and ends of baptism, that they may with the understanding renew their baptismal vow, whether at eight, or ten, or twelve, or sixteen, years of age, I dispute not: Rev. Mr. T. Case owned God at six years of age, and served him till eighty-four, yea the baptized must set themselves as solemnly to transact this covenant engagement, as if it were now first to be done; and indeed the stress of the covenant relation of adult persons lies upon this personal engagement. Thousands have

* Mark, xvi. 16.

gone to hell with baptismal water on their faces: if the house of Israel be uncircumcised in heart, they shall be ranked, punished, yea, banished with Egypt, Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Are ye not, said God, as the children of Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? even the circumcised Jews are but a generation of vipers, without faith and repentance; for circumcision only profiteth the sincere, genuine saint, who is circumcised in heart, who is a new creature, who hath faith working by love, which otherwise avails nothing,* no, nor baptism: the ark of the covenant will not save them that are out of the covenant: this seal of grace saves not slighters of grace. Baptism saves (it is true,) "but not the putting away of the filth of the flesh," (that is but skin deep,) "but the answer of a good conscience towards God," 1 Pet. iii. 21. As many as have been baptized into Christ, who have the whole of baptism, literally and spiritually, have put on Christ.† that is, by faith; thus are we all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus: well then, personal covenanting is of absolute necessity to christianize persons christened in infancy: yea, a great divine hath left it upon record, that of two evils the church is more corrupted, for want of such a solemn, serious renewing of the baptismal covenant when at age, and by turning confirmation into a ceremony, than by the Baptists who call people to be seriously rebaptized, as the African Council did those who had been baptized by heretics,‡ and certainly the heart consent in covenanting is absolutely necessary.

Sixth argument, I draw from a fitness required for the Lord's supper, thus:—

That which qualifies persons for a due participa-

* Jer. ix. 25, 26. Amos ix. 7. Matt. iii. 7, 8. Rom. ii. 29. Gal. vi. 15. Gal. v. 6. † Gal. iii. 26, 27.

‡ Mr. Baxter, Catechising, p. 400.

tion of the Lord's supper is necessary to constitute a saint.

But personal covenanting with God is that which, amongst other things, qualifies persons for the due participation of the Lord's supper.

Therefore personal covenanting is necessary to constitute a saint.

That those who partake of this ordinance ought to be saints, I think is past doubt—saints professionally in the judgment of the church's charity, saints really in God's account, if they expect any benefit from this blessed ordinance. It was "they that gladly received the word, who were baptized, and so being added to the church, continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and in prayers," Act. ii. 41, 42. This ordinance "is a communion of the body and blood of Christ,"* and that presupposeth union to him; it is a heap of wheat set about with lillies, lilly-white saints.† Dogs are not fit for children's bread. Hypocrites partake of the supper of the Lord, not of the Lord in the supper. It is living persons only that are capable to feed on Christ; "He that eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood," that is, by saving faith, "he," and he only, "hath eternal life;"‡ this is the truth,(whatever terms of communion churches have, larger or stricter,) that real saintship is necessary to spiritual feasting on Jesus Christ: holy things for holy men.

And that personal covenanting with God is necessary to qualify persons for due and profitable participation of the Lord's supper is clear, if we consider the nature of that precious ordinance. The Lord's supper is a sacred institution, in which, by bread and wine, consecrated, broken, poured out, given, taken, eaten and

* 1 Cor. x. 16. † Cant. vii. 2. ‡ John vi. 53, 54, 57.

drunk, the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood for our redemption is commemorated, and the covenant of christianity mutually and solemnly renewed and sealed, in which Christ, with the benefits of his covenant is given to the faithful, and they reciprocally give up themselves to Christ, as members of his church, with which they profess communion. All this implieth and supposeth a personal covenanting; for what is a seal without a bond? This seal is annexed to the bond of the covenant; this bond is mutual and reciprocal. God gives his Son, (and consequently himself,) to the believing soul, and as the worthy communicant accepts him, so he dedicates himself entirely to God, and this is personal covenanting; this is a professing and a confirming of a mutual covenant, by this sacred seal: our Lord saith, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins,"* and this is made over to individuals; take, eat, this is my body which is broken for thee, and thee in particular; and no man is a worthy receiver, but he that is in covenant: others eat and drink unworthily, and are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and eat and drink judgment to themselves.† Thou hast no right to the Lord of the supper, and therefore not to the supper of the Lord without covenanting; this is the chief thing wherein the communicant must examine himself: eating a morsel of bread, and drinking a cup of wine is not the chief thing in this solemnity; the covenant must be made before, and renewed, and confirmed at this table. The marrow and mystery of this ordinance is a mutual surrendering of God and the soul to each other, with free acceptation. It is true it is a commemoration of this propitiatory sacrifice, but that sup-

* Matt. xxvi. 28. Luke xxii. 20. † 1 Cor. xi. 27, 28.

poses a person's embracing a crucified Jesus, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and swearing fealty and fidelity to him all his days.

Seventh argument is this:

That which is essential to the change produced by the Holy Ghost in believers, is necessary to the constitution of a saint.

But personal covenanting with God is essential to the change produced by the Holy Ghost in believers.

Therefore personal covenanting with God is necessary to the constitution of a saint.

That none are real saints but those that have the Spirit of God, is clear from Rom. viii. 9, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and ver. 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" it is a contradiction to say a man is spiritual, without the Spirit; they are sensual that have not the Spirit; real saints are spiritualized; they receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith, they are baptized into it, are regenerated by it, led by it, walk in it, have the first fruits of it, are assisted in prayer by it, are sealed with this Holy Spirit of promise, and thus it becomes the earnest of their future inheritance, surely all these places are not insignificant.* There are such in the world as have the Spirit; can we imagine the Holy Ghost is withdrawn, when our Lord promiseth it shall continue with his followers for ever?† Is he unfaithful to his word? or is the Holy Ghost unfaithful to his office? hath God no church or people on earth? Let not mortal man slight or scorn the Spirit's influence, or deny his operations, lest that sin border upon the unpardonable sin; we assert not immediate and extraordinary inspirations,

* Jude 19. Gal. iii. 2. 1 Cor. xii. 13. Gal. v. 16, 18. Rom. viii. 26. Eph. i. 13, 14. † John xiv. 16.

or influence, to enable men to indite scriptures, know secrets, or work miracles, but doubtless there are sanctifying, illuminating, regulating operations of the Spirit upon the hearts of believers. If this concern not Christians at this day, we must seek another Bible; surely these expressions were not calculated for the meridian of apostolic days, but are suited to the saints in all ages to the end of the world, since Christ's promise and prayer concern us as well as them.*

Now for the minor, that personal covenanting with God is essential to the change produced by the Holy Ghost upon believers; this is plain, for as the perfective works of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, so the due application of Christ's merits, and fruits of his death, resurrection and ascension, is made by the Holy Spirit; yea, all that Christ hath done is ineffectual to the soul without this. The Holy Ghost communicates to the believer, light, life, love and habits of grace, excites acts of grace, works faith, engages him to prefer unseen, heavenly treasures to earthly grandeur, and venture his soul and highest concerns upon God's infallible word; this is the work of the Spirit, to unite God and the soul together, for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;† as this union is by covenanting, so it has the import of the phrases, cleaving to the Lord, and swearing by his name, Deut. x. 20; being thus one spirit means a conjunction of his spirit with the Spirit of Christ, or by one and the same Spirit of God, as the cause of this union, and the Christian thereby becomes actuated by the same spirit, according to the same rule, for the same end, though in an inferior degree, in a lower sphere; yet as he is, so are we in the world, being animated by the same spirit as Christ is.‡ All relation to God, and harmony of affections in saints, proceeds

* Matt. xxviii. 20. Joh. xvii. 20. † 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‡ 1 Joh. iv. 17.

from the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty ;* that is, the Holy Spirit dissolves all other bonds of a sinful nature, and being made free from sin, he binds the soul to God to become his servant by this covenant bond ;† the Spirit holds the believer's hand, while he subscribes his name to the Lord; this is what forms the blessed agreement, and therefore it is put into the covenant, Isa. lix. 21; we should never join hands with God in covenant, did not the Spirit lift up our hand as high as heaven; and those cannot be saints that are not thus consecrated to God, and united to him by the Spirit; and this leads to the

Eight argument, drawn from the nature of sanctification.

That which includes and supposes sanctification must needs go to the constitution of a saint.

But covenanting with God doth include and suppose sanctification.

Therefore covenanting with God must needs go to constitute a real saint.

Indeed it is a gross contradiction to call a man a saint, without sanctification; this were as absurd as to say a man were a rational creature without a reasonable soul. It is true, some may be nominally or professionally accounted saints, that yet are not savingly sanctified; but none are so indeed who shall be gathered together with saints, and rewarded as such at the last day, but they that are sanctified wholly, or throughout in soul, spirit and body; without holiness no man shall see God; the pure in heart shall see God; if any are chosen to salvation, it is still through sanctification of the Spirit ;‡ the justified are sanctified; holiness is the badge of all God's children; and though profane wits may scoff

* 2 Cor. iii. 17. † Rom. vi. 22.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. xii. 14. Matt. v. 8. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

at the name, yet all that are partakers of the heavenly calling, are holy brethren;* there is no medium, all persons either bear the character of saints or brutes, are like angels or like devils; and this holiness must be according to the scripture rule; there must be grace in the heart, and holiness in the life, according to the pattern; "Be ye holy, for I am holy;"† as he is holy, not by a parity but sincerity, not by equality but integrity; you must have a personal holiness, or have no personal happiness, for there shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth.

And that holiness, or sanctification doth chiefly consist in covenanting with God, is plain from the notion of the word which signifies a separation of a person or thing, from a common to a sacred use, or a consecration or dedication to God,‡ which is nothing else but this covenanting; Psal. iv. 3, "But know ye that the Lord hath set apart the man that is godly for himself;" which imports both parts of sanctification, namely, a mortification or dying to sin, and vivification or living to God. "Sanctification," saith a great divine, "is no less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love, as a whole burnt-offering to Christ:" this, this is the true covenanting of which I am treating. "Every devoted thing," saith the scripture, "is most holy unto the Lord:"‖ if you be sanctified by the Spirit, and have dedicated yourselves to God, according to God's institution, you have rightly covenanted with him, and so are saints or sanctified; but without this no saintship.

* Heb. iii. 1. † 1 Pet. i. 16.

‡ קדש ab usu communi ad divinum separatus. Joel. i. 14.

‖ Lev. xxvii. 28.

Ninth argument.

That which marries a soul to God is necessary to saintship.

But this personal covenanting marries the soul to God.

Therefore this covenanting with God is necessary to saintship.

The major is clear; the soul's marriage to God or Christ is, in the scripture language, a periphrasis or manner of expression to describe a real saint, or a believer; the scriptures are copious, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever;"* and this is an exemplifying of the covenant before mentioned; "Thy maker is thy husband, and I am married to thee, saith the Lord;"† the paranymphs or wooers for Christ are gospel ministers, who entreat sinners to enter into this engagement, and rejoice as friends of the bridegroom when they perceive it likely to go on;‡ then as a young man marries a virgin, so do the church's sons marry church members to Jesus Christ, so Paul espoused the believing Corinthians to one husband;‖ the terms of this contract or conjugal bond are: thou shalt be for me alone, and not for another, and take me in all states and conditions, deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me; this is true saintship.§ Our Lord marries none but those who have been divorced from a former husband; they are dead to the law who are married to Christ;¶ none but saints are married to Christ, he makes them so, though he does not find them so, see Eph. v. 25—28.

That personal covenanting marrieth the soul to God, is plain, for marriage is a mutual consent declared be-

* Hos. ii. 19. ver. 18, 20. † Isa. liv. 5. Jer. iii. 12, 14.
‡ Prov. ix. 3. John iii. 29. ‖ Isa. lxii. 5. 2 Cor. xi. 2.
§ Hos. iii. 3. Matt. xvi. 24. Rev. xiv. 4. ¶ Rom. vii. 4.

fore witnesses, whereby the parties accept of each other as man and wife, and give up themselves to each other in that near relation; thus do God and the believing soul. God declares his free consent in the scriptures, and now the convert is made truly willing, and personally owns God, and manifests his consent; thus the engagement is made. This mutual surrender or delivering of themselves to one another, is the substance of this covenant marriage, for covenanting is so essential to marriage, that it is called the covenant of God;* and from thence results that reciprocal right or title, that married persons have to the bodies or estates of each other, called in scripture power or privilege, more than any other persons have or can have;† the case is so here, and it is expressed in the covenant with Abraham, and so with all his seed, Gen. xvii. 7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee—to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed for ever;" that is, on God's part. "I am thine," saith David, Psal. cxix. 94; there is the soul's part in this marriage; and still there is a mutual profession of this relation after this marriage covenant is formed—thou art my God, saith the saint; thou art my child, subject, servant, saith God to the soul; Isa. xliii. 1, "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob—I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine,"‡ these words are so full and emphatical, (saith Mr. Weemse,‖) that the Jews write these two short words LI ATTA, thou art mine, as a motto upon their rings, and about their gates, as the sum of the whole covenant, and comprehending all the promises; and it is worth our observing, that when God betroths his people to himself, by making a covenant with them, he

* Prov. ii. 17. Mal. ii. 11, 14. † 1 Cor. vii. 4. ἐξουσιάζει.
‡ לי אתה tu mihi. ‖ Weemse's Exp. of moral law, p. 26.

then makes a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, Hos. ii. 18, 19. The influences of heaven, fruitfulness of the earth, nourishment by corn, wine, and oil, are happy consequences of this marriage covenant, or blessed contract; yea, all the attributes of God, the offices of Christ, and operations of the Holy Spirit, are made over to the covenant soul for its good; the ground of all is, that God saith, "I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God," see ver. 23, And is not this marriage covenant necessary to saintship? is it not necessary that God should be our God? Then this personal covenanting is needful.

The tenth and last argument I shall produce is this:—

That which qualifies persons for receiving gospel privileges, is necessary to constitute a saint.

But personal covenanting with God qualifies persons for receiving gospel privileges.

Therefore personal covenanting is necessary to constitute a saint.

The truth of the first proposition is evident; for if saintship is necessary to give a right to partake of gospel privileges, so, that which qualifies persons for receiving them, is necessary to constitute a saint. By gospel privileges I mean justification, adoption, reconciliation, communion with God, hearing of prayers, eternal salvation; these make children's bread, and which is not to be given to dogs; it is true, dogs may be about the table, and some crumbs may fall to them, such as being baptized, externally called, having communion with God's people, enjoying outward ordinances, but none enjoy the aforesaid saving benefits but real saints, none can expect to receive legacies, but such as are qualified according to the last will of the testator; so it would be insufferable presumption to challenge a

share in spiritual comforts without suitable dispositions. It is true, no man can produce those qualifications of himself, nor may we expect to bring them as a price to procure acceptance; but divine grace chains together graces and privileges, duties and dignities. Our Lord is a prince to give repentance to those; to whom he is a Saviour to give remission of sins;* only true believers are justified, none but the sanctified are saved, there are some things that accompany salvation,† that is, some sincere qualifications that proceed from special grace, and end in eternal glory; and though these merit not heaven, yet they render persons meet for that heavenly inheritance;‡ this is called worthiness, "they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;"‖ this is to be understood in an evangelical sense. Holiness capacitates for the exercise of grace, and gives actual possession of, and comfort in gospel privileges; the habit and state give an hereditary right: the drawing forth of those habits in act gives an aptitude and fitness for a due improvement of these privileges.

With respect to the minor, that covenanting with God qualifies the soul to receive gospel privileges: what is covenanting but a returning to God by faith and repentance? A heart devoted to God, and accepting of God, is a soul entitled to the favour of God: faith is an accepting or receiving of God and Christ, "to as many as received him, he gives power, right or privilege, ἐξουσίαν, to become the sons of God, and so to partake of the benefits of filiation.§ Abraham's advantages were by promise, that is, by compact or covenant, and so are the privileges that appertain to Abraham's spiritual seed;¶ he that hath the tree hath right to all the fruit growing on that tree; "so he that hath the Son

* Acts v. 31. xiii. 39. xxvi. 18. † Heb. vi. 9 ‡ Col. i. 12.
‖ Rev. iii. 4. § John i. 12. ¶ Gal. iii. 18.

hath life;* he that hath right to the tree of life, doth enter in through the gates into the city,† "for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen."‡ A title to the tree of life was lost by the fall, but is restored in a covenant way; he that comes not in at this door, hath neither part nor lot in the matter; general declarations advantage not without particular application; "the just shall live by his faith;" an individual soul may perish notwithstanding that Christ is a common Saviour, except he be his in covenant. A drowning man in a brook lifted up his eyes, and seeing the rainbow, called to mind the promise, that there shall not be any more a flood to destroy the earth;‖ but then he said, reflecting painfully on his situation, Alas what is this to me, who am now drowning in this flood? even so, nothing but personal title yields personal comfort; and without personal covenanting there is no personal title. Persons are but, in a sort, tantalized, not satisfied without particular appropriation; the glory of religion lies in propositions or promises, but our comfort in religion stands in possessives: the excellence of our duty consists in adverbs, but the safety of our state in pronouns, mine, thine, ours.§ What is God, if he be not my God? What is pardon and heaven, if not mine? That is the sweetest text in the Bible, John xx. 17, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God," when we can individually re-echo Thomas's confession, ver. 28, "My Lord and my God." The most aspiring hypocrite cannot truly say this word, My God. Ahaz durst not say "I will not tempt the Lord *my God*," but Isaiah could say, "will ye weary *my God* also."¶ But why doth

* 1 John v. 12. † Rev. xxii. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 20.
‖ Gen. ix. 11. § Quid est Deus si non sit meus?
¶ Isa. vii. 12, 13.

Isaiah say to Ahaz, *thy God?* ver. 11. I answer, to remind him of his duty, to take God for his God according to his profession, as if he had said, thou oughtest to own him as thy God. But doth not Balaam the magician say, "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God."* A learned writer observes that Balaam called God, his God, after the manner of the eastern nations, taking him to be the God of his country,† who had informed his mind, and enlightened it at that time. But it is one thing what presumption may assert, another what sincerity can prove, or God approve: wicked men may make confident claims, but the covenanted soul owns God by scripture warrant; for none have a title to God's favour but such as are in covenant with him. Thus I have despatched the arguments, to prove that personal covenanting with God is the constituent property of a real saint; and so prepared my way for my main design.

CHAP. VI.

WHAT IS AN ESSENTIALLY NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR ENTERING INTO PERSONAL COVENANT WITH GOD.

III. It is now proposed to ascertain, as briefly as may be, what frame of spirit a man is to bring to the engagement, who will solemnly and acceptably perform this great duty of personal covenanting?

And here I would be both tender of the sincere attempts of weak Christians, and yet faithful to the souls of all, that none may deceive himself with an honest

* Num. xxii. 18. Weems on Moral Law, p. 27. † 1 Kings xi. 33.

intention without due qualifications for such an engagement. If Esther must have twelve months' preparation, by purification, six months' with oil of myrrh, and six months' with sweet odours, that she might be prepared to be married to an earthly monarch;* O what need have souls to be duly qualified for entering this intimate alliance with the King of kings! the soul is brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work.† Christians must first prepare their hearts, and then stretch out their hands towards God;‡ which is not only in prayer, and such particular duties, but in this solemn act of covenanting, which was done by the ceremony of lifting up, or stretching out the hand, Psal. cxix. 48, "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments which I have loved," that is, I have made a covenant with God according to his word, or to keep his commandments.

Before I mention these preparatives to the formation of a covenant engagement; observe,

That there is a twofold covenanting with God, namely, virtual and formal; the First is implied, whereby a Christian doth consecrate himself to God in every performance, as in reading, hearing, praying, meditating, and thereby profess his relation to God as his Father, and dedication to God as his child, servant, subject: this is a covenanting with God by sacrifice, of which before, and this must be prepared for, and seriously regarded in all our approaches to God; but this is not all that I mean, for,

Secondly, there is a solemn, express, and professed entering into and renewing of covenant with God, and time set apart chiefly for that engagement, reducing all other Christian exercises to a subordination, for helping on the soul in this work; and as I have proved

* Esther ii. 12. † Psal. xlv. 14. ‡ Job xi. 13.

that it is essential to saintship, yea, the constituent form of a Christian, as a Christian; so other religious duties contribute their assistance for the due management of this important affair; for which therefore preparation must be made.

1. You must understand what you are going about. Without knowledge the heart is not good, or that the soul be without knowledge it is not good;* the covenanting Christian must have his eyes in his head. Let others say, ignorance is the mother of devotion, we say, of destruction, for, saith God, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."† Men cannot give a due consent to that of which they are ignorant. "Thou shalt swear," or covenant with God by oath, "the Lord liveth," that is, as the object, author, and fountain of life and happiness; but how? "in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;"‡ judgment is set in the middle, as looking inward at the truth and sincerity of the heart, and looking forward at the due performance of the oath in righteousness; for men may swear to what is a truth considered materially, yet swear falsely in a moral sense, as it respects their own sentiments and views; "Though they say the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely;"‖ a truth in itself is a falsehood in their mouths. O Christians, you have a great need to know what you do; you must get a due understanding of the nature and attributes of that God with whom you covenant; of yourselves, what you were by creation in innocency, what you are by the fall in sin and misery, what you must be by grace in your recovery; by whose means, and upon what basis this new covenant is founded and depends, even Christ the mediator; by whom christian graces, and spiritual dispositions are wrought, and benefits conveyed, namely by the Holy

* Prov. xix. 2. † Hos. iv. 6. ‡ Jer. iv. 2. ‖ Jer. v. 2.

Ghost; what are the privileges made over to the sincere covenanter; what are the terms, for what end and design it is proposed, God's glory, and man's good; the different administrations, and gracious promises comprehended in this glorious dispensation: such things you must know, or else you do, you know not what, when you go about personal covenanting. Joshua would not suffer Israel to enter into covenant, till he had informed their judgments, and rectified their mistakes; see Joshua xxiv. 16—25; and our Lord Jesus thought fit to acquaint a forward young gentleman with the terms upon which he must be a Christian, Matt. xix. 16—22; the former did enter into a covenant on being well advised, the latter, a false-hearted hypocrite, took his leave; as he liked not the terms, he bid farewel, and it was as well to part at first as last; for Christ and the depraved heart must part. Our Lord loves not to decoy men into his service by a mistake, he loves plain dealing, and tells them the worst at first, he will have no self-deceiving followers; they say, war is pleasant to the unexperienced;* a red coat, a good suit, money in hand, and fair promises tempt fond young men to list themselves, but when they meet with winter lodgings in the open air, storming towns, or sharp service in a field of battle, they come off with, I little thought of this, and flinch away and outrun their colours, and if they are caught they suffer: thus do many in religion, they engage themselves in it, they know not why, and forsake it they know not for what. It is told of one of the kings of England, in the time of the heptarchy, that hearing a Christian bishop or minister when preaching lay open the excellencies and privileges of christianity, he would needs in post-haste turn Christian and be baptized, and was so, it may be,

* Dulce bellum inexpertis.

too hastily, and fell again into his old vanities and debaucheries; being then admonished, that that course of life was inconsistent with christianity, he presently abandoned his new assumed religion, that he might retain his old abominations. It is well if many do not thus own religion merely from a mistake; and therefore the primitive church appointed catechists to train up and try new converts for a season, in order to their solemn entering into a baptismal covenant, and being received as adult members to all church privileges. O that you did duly understand what you do in this great affair; think and think again of it; learn all that it is fit you should know; it is dangerous to be invincibly ignorant, it is ruinous to be wilfully ignorant; if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;* and if you neither know this way of peace, nor study to know it, but say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;"† I pronounce you to be without Christ, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."‡ O then, as ever you would seriously enter into this covenant, get your minds well informed; be not satisfied with well-meaning, or an honest mind, which carnal hearts joining with Socinians do applaud, though distinct from, yea, without saving knowledge;‖ but you have not so learned Christ; see then that you thus hear him, and be taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;§ and then you are prepared for covenanting with him.

2. You must break off confederacy with all others. This is absolutely necessary; no covenanting with God till you be divorced from the world, the flesh, and the devil; our Lord admits of no competition; the throne

* 2 Cor. iv. 3. † Rom. iii. 17. Job xxi. 14. ‡ Eph. ii. 12.
‖ Vid. Dr. Tuckney, Thes. præl. Theol. p. 181. § Eph. iv. 21.

and bed suffer no rival; you cannot serve God and mammon, nor swear by the Lord and by Malcham; if your heart be divided you will be found wanting:* "What communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?"† God will not treat with that man that keeps his sword in his hands; throw down your weapons, your sins, "wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings," saith God, "from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, &c. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord;"‡ forsake the foolish and live, cast away all your idols and abominations; say of your loveliest graven images of silver, and the most costly ornaments of your molten images of gold, "Get you hence; what have I to do any more with idols?"‖ "O Lord our God, other lords have had dominion over us besides thee; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."§ "God forbid that I should henceforth serve sin; if I could get free from sin, I should then become the servant of righteousness.¶ I renounce my sinful self, my civil self, my relative, yea my righteous self, and all things whatsoever that stand in competition with thee; yea, I will beat down my body, and deny my natural self of any thing that may feed the flesh, and make it break the reins of temperance, chastity, and sobriety; by the assistance of God's grace I will renounce the world as the chief source of happiness, and set myself against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, by which I have been so oft entangled."** God forbid that any inferior object should captivate your heaven-born soul; what is gold to God? what are goods to grace? what is earth to heaven? Alas that

* Matt. vi. 24. Zeph. i. 5. Hos. x. 2. † 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.
‡ Isa. i. 16—18. ‖ Isa. xxx. 22. Hos. xiv. 8. § Isa. xxvi. 13.
¶ Rom. vi. 18. ** 1 John ii. 16.

gain should be your godliness, your shop, your temple, your coffer, your shrine! Come, soul, do not stand out, nor capitulate with God, as though you were upon equal terms with him, or as princes, that, if their opponents come not up to their proposal, prepare to take up arms and right or revenge themselves by force. Be it known to you, that you are rebel-subjects, whom the great King hath bound in chains, and can hang up at his pleasure for your treasons; only he waits with patience till you return to allegiance, and upon lower terms he will not receive you; then cast down your arms, and cry for mercy. God's justice and holiness are both engaged against sin, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" * there is one red letter in God's name, "he will by no means clear the guilty,"† that is, the wicked, who holds fast his deceit; he cannot be reconciled to the sinner, who loves his sin more than God; and he doth so who will not part with sin to be in friendship with God; he that keeps his make-bate in his bosom, shall not be taken into God's bosom; for sin only made the breach, and divorce from sin only makes up the breach; canst thou expect God should betray his honour, and deny himself to gratify thee? did you ever hear of a prince giving permission to effect his own dethronement? Now sin is high treason against the Sovereign of the universe;‡ as long as the traitor is within, God will not raise the seige or hear of treating for peace; cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, cast it over the wall,‖ and you shall find him a friend; nor must you think, as one saith, to send a beloved lust out of the way for a while, as princes use to do with their favourites in a popular commotion to please the people, and then call them

* Isa. lvii. 21. † Exod. xxxiv. 7.
‡ Omne peccatum est deicidium. ‖ 2 Sam. xx. 22.

home when the storm is over: God will not thus be mocked, either bid a perpetual adieu to sin, or God and your souls will never meet in amity; nothing but sin will forbid the banns of marriage betwixt God and you; and what lust is so sweet, so profitable, for which it is worth being tormented in hell for ever? When Darius fled before Alexander, he cast away his massy crown from his head, which encumbered him in his escape, so do thou, Heb. xii. 1.

3. Your will must be disposed to give a cordial consent. An assent of the understanding, or a withdrawment of the affections from sin, in some instances, is not enough, except there be a mighty change of the will; the will is the refuser and chooser of objects, it is the master wheel in the soul; it is the soul's weight, for which way that goes, all goes; affections are but movements of the will; you will never hate sin till the will be set against it; your sins may leave you, the unclean spirit may go out, but is not driven out, unless the will be set against it. Moses's choice was in his will, and he forsook the court when grown up; reason dictated to his will, and the will complied with reason. A man doth not forsake his wife when he is detained from her in prison, but when he puts her away and gives her a bill of divorce; and no man can be forced to marry a wife, or a wife a husband against their will; that is no marriage which wants consent of the will. God lays the chief stress on this, "if you be willing and obedient; you will not come to me that you may have life; the people shall be willing in the day of thy power; if there be first a willing mind it is accepted;"* if the will be ready the whole man is ready. What we are willing to do, we put all things in a readiness to accomplish: as one saith, "Because the Lord is ready

* Isa. i. 19. John v. 40. Psal. cx. 3. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

to forgive, he keeps, as it were, blank pardons by him to distribute to penitents; it is but putting a name to them, and it is done;" so when a man's will is renewed, he subscribes with his hand to the Lord, a covenant engagement is made; he becomes willing and ready to embrace the first opportunity, he sets all things in order for it, he puts off other business and company, and withdraws himself to manage the concern effectually, nothing shall hinder him. Mary will throw off all other business, and will sit at Jesus' feet; the bowing of the will unlocks the door, and sets it open for Christ; when God saith, seek my face, the renewed will echos, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* But if your wills be not forward, you will make a thousand objections, some lion is in the way: you will not set about this or that engagement to purpose without your will; and God will not receive you, except you consent with your heart; this is a spiritual marriage, and requires the will's consent; assent of the understanding will not serve without consent of the will; this is that which God chiefly requires, "My son, give me thy heart;"† this is that for which ministers entreat sinners, "that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord;"‡ this is the proper act of saving faith, "With the heart man believes."‖ You do nothing except you be truly willing; you will but mock God and deceive yourselves, without a willing heart. O sirs, feel your pulse, try your state, hath grace changed your will? then come and engage in covenant with God; "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."§ It is true, "It is God only that worketh in us, both to will and to do;"¶ but you are to enquire whether God hath wrought thus; and being acted upon you will act, being moved

* Psal. xxvii. 8. † Prov. xxiii. 26. ‡ Act. xi. 23.
‖ Rom. x. 10. § Rev. xxii. 17. ¶ Phil. ii. 13.

you will move apace God-wards; nothing will prevent you, and if the will go along with you, you will be sincere in making, and faithful in keeping this blessed covenant.

4. Your hearts must be duly humbled; your spirits will never stoop to gospel terms without sincere humiliation; "Take my yoke on you," saith Christ, how? why, "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart:"* that stiff sinew in your necks must be bent, or else you will scorn gospel terms, and be like a wild bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke;† a broken heart only will be fit to grieve for sin: O that you did sensibly perceive yourselves children of wrath by nature, bond slaves to Satan, enemies to God, under a dreadful curse, ready to perish, unable to help yourselves: O then you will see a need of a physician, and willingly submit to his severest prescriptions, to recover your soul's health; you will lay yourselves low at God's feet, and judge yourselves unworthy of this high honour, and say as David did once, "Who am I, or what is my life, that I should be thus advanced?"‡ Seemeth it a light thing to be the King of heaven's son! Who durst have presumed to aspire to such an honour, if the great God had not condescended to take such a worm? Must the thistle in Lebanon be allied to the cedar in Lebanon?‖ Shall I who am less than the least of God's mercies, be advanced to the highest of privileges? Who could believe it, but that God himself saith it? Let the terms be what they will, I have great reason to acquiesce in them, and subscribe to them. Dismounted Saul of Tarsus will say, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?§ or the Jews pricked in their hearts, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"¶ or the affrighted jailor, "Sirs, what must I

* Matt. xi. 29. † Jer. xxxi. 18. ‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 18—23.
‖ 2 Chron. xxv. 18. § Act. ix. 6. ¶ Act. ii. 37.

do to be saved?"* or as the German divine, let us put our necks under Christ's yoke, and obey his word, if we had six hundred necks.† When Paul was submissively humbled, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," nor "consulted with flesh and blood,"‡ but immediately yielded to God's terms; the humbled soul picks no quarrels with God's proposals, but freely subscribes to his articles, and the stricter the better; let flesh complain, the humble soul takes God's side, and looks on all that he prescribes as holy, just, and good;‖ but a proud, unhumbled heart riseth in rebellion against God, instead of covenanting with him, and is ready to say as proud Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" They were proud men that scorned Jeremiah's message,§ therefore he saith, "hear ye, give ear, be not proud for the Lord hath spoken."¶ Proud men are self-sufficient, and think they can shift well enough without God, and say, "we are lords, we will come no more to thee."** God knows the proud afar off and keeps them at a distance in point of covenanting or communion, "but he gives grace to the humble,"†† yea, he dwells with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit;‡‡ the lower you are, the nearer to God; you must humble yourselves to walk with God; cast yourselves at his feet, and he will lift you up; the showers of covenant mercy flow down into the valleys of humility; lie at God's feet, and you shall receive the benefit resulting from his word;‖‖ give God glory by taking shame to yourselves; be ashamed you have stood out so long, resisted so many calls of his word, impulses of his Spirit, and checks of conscience calculated

* Act. xvi. 30. † Submittamus verbo Domini si sexcenta nobis essent colla. ‡ Act. xxvi. 19. Gal. i. 16. ‖ Rom. vii. 12.
§ Jer. xliii. 2. ¶ Jer. xiii. 15. ** Jer. ii. 31.
†† 1 Pet. v. 5. ‡‡ Isa. lvii. 15. ‖‖ Deut. xxxiii. 3.

to induce you to enter into this covenant with the Lord; lay to heart that you have so long turned a deaf ear to his solemn calls, and broken his bonds asunder, and cast his covenant behind your back. Ah soul, "see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done, that thou hast been as a swift dromedary, traversing her ways;"* when God brings his people to himself in covenant, "they shall come with weeping and with self-bemoanings:"† Oh, saith the soul, what a wretch am I! my bones are full of the sins of my youth, I have forgot my baptismal covenant; "I, like man," that is, Adam at first, "have transgressed the covenant, therein have I dealt treacherously against the Lord;"‡ yea, I have slidden back by a perpetual backsliding, I have held fast deceit, and have refused to return;‖ it is a wonder I am not in hell; alas, my heart is hardened to a prodigy, I am as dried stubble fit for the fire, and is there yet any hope? Doth God wait to be gracious? Well, I come, Lord, as I can, upon my knees. O that at last my heart were knit to thee! O that my heart were sincere! I doubt it, I much fear it; this depraved, treacherous, hypocritical heart, hath so often deceived me, I have great reason to be jealous it will cozen me in this great affair. God loves to see a soul humbly bending at his feet, to lay hold on his covenant, that is the soul he will accept. It is storied of Augustus, that having promised by proclamation a great sum of money to any one who should bring him the head of a famous pirate—the pirate hearing of this, brought it himself, and threw himself at his feet, he was accepted, pardoned, and rewarded; go you and do likewise in reference to our gracious God.

5. Put on a holy resolution to enter into this covenant, notwithstanding all contradiction: you will find

* Jer. ii. 23. † Jer. xxxi. 9, 18. ‡ Hos. vi. 7. ‖ Jer. viii. 5.

much opposition from without and from within: Satan will interpose and forbid the banns of this holy marriage, and claim an interest in you by prescription, time out of mind; one while he will allure as an angel of light, at other times affright as a roaring lion: * the world will divert or deter you, and tell you it is more ado than needs, thou hast something else to do: but above all, a deceitful heart will muster up all its faculties, and plausibly will begin to make excuses, † I have this and that to do; the flesh will pull back, and unite with the devil and the world, and say, What needs all this? this preciseness is but an invention of these Puritan priests, who would bring all folks under their girdle, it is enough for us to serve God, pray, attend church, receive the sacrament as well as we can—what need we to bind ourselves in covenant? Thus a carnal heart would slip the collar, would be loose, and is loth to lay conscience under the severe obligation of a sacred oath, but still would leave some hole to creep out at, to gratify some appetite: and therefore you must put on a heroic resolution, to do it whatever it cost you, to act according to conviction; to put in present execution what your heart suggests and your hand finds to do. Thus we find holy Joshua stirring up the people to courage as preparatory to their covenanting, chap. xxiii. 6, "Be ye therefore very courageous, to keep, and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses:" and why courage? because they should meet with much opposition in the way of duty. Every part of religion hath its difficulties; uprightness hath boldness; the Levites are said to have been more upright in heart, to sanctify themselves than the priests were; ‡ the priests shewed more policy than piety, as if they would stay a while and see

* 2 Cor. xi. 14. 1 Pet. v. 8. † Luke xiv. 18. ‡ 2 Chron. xxix. 34.

how the times would prove, before they would engage, lest they should be more forward than wise. Reformation-work is but an icy path, saith one, cowardly spirits love to have it well-beaten and broken by others, before they dare venture; but sincerity is of a better cast, like the true traveller, whom no weather will keep from going his appointed journey. An upright man stands not looking at the clouds, imagining this or that scarecrow, but takes his warrant from the word of God, and nothing will daunt him if he have a commission from heaven. God's pleasure is bounty-money to carry him through this warfare; a resolute spirit chides his slack and slothful heart; "My soul wait thou upon God:* my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed," yet still a little short, he adds, "awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early."† The true covenanters ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherwards;‡ this shews intention and fervency of spirit, a magnanimous resolution to go through with the business, whatever it cost, as Christ is said, "stedfastly to set his face to go to Jerusalem,"|| nothing could take him off, or make him linger or loiter in the way, no entreaties, fear, or shame could stay him, but he goes towards the place, saith Bede, with a kind of obstinate and fearless mind;§ just thus must you do, you must not cast about how this covenanting may consist with your profit, credit, ease, or carnal designs, but set about it with a holy magnanimity to bind hand and foot, soul and body to be the Lord's; there is no delay or dallying in the case, but as the ten lepers said, "If we enter into the city, the famine is there—if we sit still, we shall die; now then let us fall to the host of the Syrians, if they save us alive, we live, if they kill us,

* Ps. lxii. 5. † Ps. lvii. 7, 8. ‡ Jer. l. 5. || Luke ix. 51.
§ Obstinatâ et imperterritâ mente locum petiit.

we shall but die;"* so must you make a bold venture, not with a may-be, and who can tell? there is ground enough from scripture promises and precedents for faith to rest upon; God will bear you up, and bear you out as one of his followers: go on, soul, as Moses did, who when he was grown up, or great enough to make his choice, or "when he was come to years," so we read it, "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer"†—he was forty years of age, and had often pondered it, and had laid the weights of all the important circumstances on both sides in the scales, he had counted the cost, and knew the best and worst, and still was determined, as Ruth to follow Naomi, or as a woman in love with an individual, who says, I must have him, and will have him, though I beg with him; so must you say, waving, all opposite persuasions, I must enter into a covenant with the Lord, I cannot live, I dare not die, without a relation to him in covenant.

6. Propose right ends to yourselves in personally engaging in covenant with the Lord. In all your particular duties, your ends and aims must be right, or you mar the success of your undertaking, and lose acceptance with God. It is true, it is lawful for a man to look to his own safety, in a secondary and subordinate way, but this thou mayest do, and yet fail, if self be thy chief end; a man taken in a storm may be forced under the pent-house of his greatest enemy for shelter, without any change of heart or better thoughts of him, as David's enemies yielded feigned or forced subjection, or as "the kings that served Hadarezer when they saw he was smitten, made peace with Israel;"‡ so some for a shift, will make a covenant with God, to save themselves from hell, and as Balaam, wish to die as the

* 2 Kings vii. 4. † Heb. xi. 24, 25. ‡ 2 Sam. x. 19.

righteous; others think by this means to merit or purchase something at God's hand, but heavenly treasures stand not upon sale, you may purchase hell, not heaven; "The wages of sin is death, but the gift God is eternal life:"* what God sold to Christ he gives to us; if you claim any thing by your own righteousness, you shut out his; this covenant engagement is not a trucking affair, you mistake the nature of the gospel, if you come to barter or bargain. You will say, what end must we propose in our covenant with God? I answer, no other end than that for which you came into the world, namely, to glorify God and to enjoy him.

(1.) Your chief end must be to perform your homage to the King of heaven; in swearing fealty and taking this sacred oath of allegiance, to signify that you hold your life and being from him, and depend on him for your subsistence, and ascribe and return all back to him: "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," mercy in making, truth in keeping covenant with thy people;† this is God's end, and must be ours. God will have his name sanctified by all that thus approach to him;‡ surely God is more glorified in our covenanting with him, than in our being condemned by him. In communicating grace to sinners lies the greatest revenue of his crown, and one single act of sincere faith glorifies God more than any other act of obedience or performance.‖ Abraham's faith glorified God more than offering his son; O sirs, you can never come with encouragement, unless you principally keep in view God's glory, as well as your good, in your covenant engagement; yea, you must have respect chiefly to that order and method whereby God raiseth a monu-

* Rom. vi. 23.
† Psalm cxv. 1. Mic. vii. 20.
‡ Lev. x. 3.
‖ Rom. iv. 20.

ment to his glory, that is the satisfying of justice by the blood of Christ. Carnal, ignorant souls, saith one, are just like prisoners at the bar; "my good Lord, have mercy, spare me, pardon me, right or wrong, legally or illegally," what care they, if they only escape punishment in whatever way it be? but another considers the equity of the law, the honour of the judge, and would sue for his pardon in a legal way; so must you, chiefly consult God's glory.

(2.) The enjoyment of him. This is the highest act and end of a rational creature, God hath connected it with his glory, and the Christian in this work must not separate them; deliverance from punishment serves not the turn of a good subject, but he would be taken into favour, and come into the presence-chamber, "Let me see the king's face, saith Absalom; let my fellowship be with the Father, and the Son," saith the believer.* This engagement is made in order to gain intimate intercourse with God, as well as reconcilement to him; the Christian in a good frame wants from heaven tokens of love, and communications of divine grace; this union is in order to communion: he lies under the descending influences of the Holy Spirit, holds the King in the galleries, and waits for mutual intercourse, which is an antedating of heaven. O for seeing the face of God, and deriving influences of grace and comfort from him!

7. Ply the throne of grace with believing prayer; without this all the former will be insignificant; you must pray before and on entering into this holy covenant; "with weeping and with supplications," saith God, "will I lead them."† This work is fittest to be done upon our knees, this whole work is of God, and he alone must manage it from first to last. Do you

* 2 Sam. xiv. 32. 1 John i. 3. † Jer. xxxi. 9.

ask, what must we pray for when we are going about this work of personal covenanting? I answer, for four things:—

(1.) Entreat the Lord for counsel and guidance in this important affair;* ask the way to Zion, when you are proceeding to form the engagement; it is an unusual course, and the Christian unacquainted with the road, knows not how to set about it, and therefore weeps and seeks the Lord his God: Lord, this concern is too high and hard for me, it is dangerous to miscarry in it, the act is soon done, but not so easily done well. God hath no pleasure in fools, in their persons or vows; I am more destitute of knowledge than any man, Lord, "make me to understand the way of thy precepts," but especially "shew me thy covenant;"† unveil covenant mysteries, display covenant mercies, and open to me covenant duties; Lord, manifest the terms, let me not stumble in the threshold, or miss my way in the end. Lord, there are secrets in thy covenant which thou dost impart to them that fear thee; teach me now in the way that I am choosing; natural reason knows little of these things, flesh and blood cannot reveal them, sometimes "thou hidest these things from the wise and prudent, and revealest them to babes;"‡ these covenant concerns are of special institution; Lord, take me by the hand and lead me in the way of truth, teach me the good way wherein I must walk,‖ keep me from stumbling, or wandering, for thou sayest, that wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein. §

(2,) Beg of the Lord sincerity and uprightness, that your deceitful hearts may not mock God and deceive you. Ephraim of old set not their hearts aright, nor was their spirit stedfast with God, and so kept not the

* Jer. l. 4. † Eccles. v. 4. Psalm cxix. 27. xxv. 14.
‡ Matt. xi. 25, 26. ‖ 1 Kings viii. 36. § Isa. xxxv. 8.

covenant of God.* O sirs, beware of this, lest you flatter God with your mouth, and lie unto him with your tongues; therefore as you must take heed to your spirit that you deal not treacherously, so must you pray earnestly to the Lord, in this strain: Behold, Lord, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, in the hidden part do thou make me to know wisdom; unite my heart to fear thy name;† this heart of mine hath oft given me the slip; now Lord, bind this sacrifice to the horns of the altar; circumcise my heart to love the Lord my God;‡ make my heart sound in thy statutes, thou knowest the way I am now taking, Lord, search me, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way within me,‖ let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity;§ I am loth to be deceived, Lord, stop my hand, if my heart go not with it, let me not subscribe to an untruth, or go on with a lie in my right hand, let my heart and life harmonize with my mouth and hand-writing, I have a base heart and am apt to say as that perfidious son, I go, sir, but went not;¶ O help me to bring this heart along with me to the work, let integrity and uprightness preserve me.**

(3.) Plead hard for renewed strength and assisting grace to stand in this covenant, thus: though I see the right way, and have a sincere desire to walk in it, yet I cannot step one foot before another without assisting grace; yea, I cannot reach out a hand to take hold of the covenant; I cannot hold the pen except thou hold my hand, without thee I can do nothing,

* Psalm lxxviii. 8, 10. † Psalm li. 6. lxxxvi. 11.
‡ Psalm cxviii. 27. Deut. xxx. 6.
‖ Psalm cxix. 80. cxxxix. 23, 24.
§ Job xxxi. 6. ¶ Matt. xxi. 30. ** Psalm xxv. 21.

but by grace strengthening, I shall be able to do all things;* I cannot think any thing as of myself, all my sufficiency is of God;† did I not hope for grace assisting, I durst not engage, for I should certainly break my covenant. Be surety for thy servant for good; Lord, I am oppressed undertake for me,‡ concern thyself with my affair, undertake for performance on both sides, to help me to perform the conditions, as well as to make good thy promises to me; the work I am about is thine, let the strength to manage it be from thee, in thy name I set about it, be my patron to defend me, my helper to uphold me, and be my exceeding great reward to satisfy me; by thy grace I am what I am.||

(4.) Believingly plead for acceptance and favour with God through Jesus Christ: you are accepted only in the Beloved;§ alas, by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified, I am cast by the covenant of works; "there is none righteous, no not one,"¶ not the boasting philosopher among the Gentiles, nor the precise Pharisee among the Jews, nor the holiest saint among Christians can stand before the tribunal of justice; my resolute promises of future reformation will not make a compensation for former offences: "enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."** God hath nailed up that door, and opened a new and living way; thus you must enter, or be rejected: the old way is like the northern passage to the Indies, whoever attempt it are sure to be frozen up before they get half way. Lord, (must you say) I renounce mine own righteousness, and flee to Christ; thou biddest me take hold on thy

* John xv. 5. Phil. iv. 13.
† 2 Cor iii. 5.
‡ Psalm cxix. 122. Isa. xxxviii. 14.
|| 1 Cor. xv. 10.
§ Eph. i. 6.
¶ Rom. iii. 10.
** Psalm cxliii. 2.

strength, to make peace with thee;* in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength; it is not my covenanting, but Christ the covenant of the people, by whom and through whom I hope to be accepted;† his work is to confirm the covenant, and to bring in everlasting righteousness;‡ he by his death and sufferings brings souls to God,‖ my poor endeavours to covenant with thee is but to get a title to thy favour, and all that Christ hath purchased. Lord, put me not away from thee in displeasure—thou biddest me come, and hast told me, "that those that come to thee, thou wilt in no wise cast out."§ Let my heavenly Joseph lead me into the King's presence; "He is thy beloved Son in whom thou art well pleased."¶ I confess thou mayest reject me, not only because of my meanness, there being a vast disparity between an infinite God and worm man, but also because of my guiltiness, there being a contrariety between a holy God and a polluted sinner; but I come to thee through a mediator—let me who have been far off, be made nigh by the blood of Christ; he only is my peace, to reconcile God and sinners;** taking hold of him, I may entertain hope; thou canst not strike the soul that relies upon him; I bring the Lord Jesus with me, O look on me in the face of thine Anointed,

* Isa. xxvii. 5. † Isa. xlix. 8. ‡ Dan. ix. 27. ‖ 1 Pet. iii. 18.
§ John vi. 37. ¶ Matt. iii. 17. ** Eph. ii. 13, 14.

CHAP. VII.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH SHOULD FORM AN INDUCEMENT TO ENTER INTO A COVENANT ENGAGEMENT WITH GOD, AND WHICH ARE FAVOURABLE TO THE DESIGN.

IV. I PROCEED now to give an account of the outward circumstances convenient for the better management of this serious and important concern; and though I shall not lay too much stress upon these, yet because all actions are clothed with some circumstances which render those actions both seasonable and more easy to be done, and also more pleasing and useful when done, I shall say something respecting them; Solomon saith, "A word fitly spoken," in the Hebrew upon its wheels,* "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver;" an allusion to a charioteer, or coachman, who hits exactly the right turn: O how pleasant and profitable is such a word or work! for a thing in its proper place is done with great facility, success, and expedition. Fit circumstances wheel a man's business apace towards the desired issue and end. Now in this affair of personal covenanting there are four circumstances to be observed, namely, time, place, manner, and assistance.

I shall very briefly advert to all these in their order:

1. For the time when this covenant is to be made or renewed: all duties are to be done in time, but there are proper and fit seasons for particular things, which are usually called opportunities, "He hath made every thing beautiful in his season, saith Solomon, and man hath his time and proper season, which, because men

* Prov. xxv. 11. דבר דבר על אפניו Verbum commode vel rotunde dictum, i. e. observatis debitis circumstantiis.

know not, they are as the fishes and birds, caught in an evil net and snare."* In general, the time of life is the only time for entering into this covenant with God, for when death hath parted soul and body, there will be no making peace with God; there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave;† hell is full of good wishes, and fair promises, on condition of those lost souls living again; but all is in vain, either now or never, you must "Seek the Lord while he may be found,"‡ touch the golden sceptre while it is stretched out, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish from the way;"‖ now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;"§ yea, take up a resolution this very instant, I cannot assure you of another offer to-morrow, you may outlive the day of grace, God may shut up his office of mercy and strive no longer with you; yea, "He may justly swear in his wrath you shall never enter into his rest:"¶ I do solemnly require and conjure you, that you take the first opportunity to enter into this covenant with the Lord.

But besides this time of life in general, there are some particular seasons that are very proper for this solemn and important transaction; I shall mention these seven:—

(1.) At the sinner's first conviction and conversion to God, when the thundering alarms of the law have laid him under dreadful apprehensions of God's flaming wrath; then he is pressed under the intolerable load of multiplied sins, he is holden in the cords of his own iniquity, and is just on the point of being dragged into the pit; what can he do? whither can he go? flee he cannot, abide these flames he is not

* Eccles. iii. 11. ix. 12 † Eccles. ix. 10. ‡ Isa. lv. 6.
‖ Psalm ii. 12. § Psalm xcv. 7, 8. ¶ Heb. iii. 18

able, resist God he cannot, perform the conditions of the old covenant, that is impossible. What shall he do? while the soul is musing on its perishing state, behold our blessed Ebed-melech lets down into this dungeon of despair the blessed cords of another covenant,* softened and lined with tender love, putting them under the armholes of perishing Jeremiahs, of God-fearing souls, and by the blood of this covenant sends forth these prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.† This method of divine grace is clearly described in Job xxxiii. 14—31, wherein God's grace finds a ransom for the perishing sinner; when sinners find themselves lost, then covenant grace is a blessed line that leads them and binds them fast to God; now Christ is welcome, when the door of hope is opened in this valley of Achor;‡ our Lord having drawn the bewildered man into a wilderness, speaks to his heart, and thus he expresses himself: And is there any hope that the circumstances of a ruined bankrupt can be retrieved? May a poor condemned malefactor have a pardon? Is it possible that an outlawed traitor may be received into the Prince's favour? Yes, the new covenant encourages me, I will make the experiment, who knows but I may find acceptance? O for a heart to accept these gracious and equal terms of the gospel covenant!

(2.) On violating previous engagements. It is very rare for any child of God to continue so stedfast in the observance of incumbent duty, but at some time or other a corrupt heart betrays him, and he falls into sin or security, to God's dishonour and the wounding of conscience; and it is by virtue of this new covenant, that God accepts a returning prodigal: Jer. iii. 12, 14, "Return thou backsliding Israel—yea, turn, O backsliding children," children still, though revolters, "for

* Jer. xxxviii. 12, 13. † Zech. ix. 11. ‡ Hos. ii. 14, 15.

I am married unto you, and I will take you," &c. yea, "I will heal your backslidings," ver. 22. The ground of this is antecedent religion, covenant grace, and what say they? "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God;" there is the foundation of their hopes, and then you find these backsliders renewing their covenant, renouncing carnal confidence, owning God as their Saviour, confessing their sins, resolving upon other practices, which is the substance of a covenant engagement, see ver. 23—25, something similar you have Hos. xiv. 2—8, after this manner the backsliding soul returns to God: O Lord, I have broken the first covenant in my original progenitor, I have violated my baptismal covenant, I have broken that solemn engagement made to thee at my first conversion, I have failed in keeping my frequent occasional vows, and still feel I have a backsliding heart; I am not worthy to be received, yet still my heart is working towards thee; I am not content to be at a distance from thee, O that now I could bind this treacherous heart with double bonds, to walk more closely with God; though I have done iniquity, I will do no more, I will not offend any more;* God forbid that I should return unto folly; Lord, say thou that word not only preceptively, but efficaciously, Sin no more;† let the will of God be my sanctification,‡ let Satan make no more inroads upon me, set thou a watch over my heart, before my lips, and on mine eyes, make the strongest fence where the hedge is lowest. I am aware where the fault was, God make me more watchful.

(3.) Under pressing afflictions; then is a fit season for renewing covenants. It is natural for persons to make large promises to God in their troubles, that

* Job xxxiv. 31, 32. † Psal. lxxxv. 8. John v. 14.
‡ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

on condition God will deliver them they would do so and so, yea and for this cause God brings men into straits, that falling under the rod they may be brought into the bond of the covenant;* God chooseth his people in the furnace of affliction. Manasseh was caught in the thorns, and bound in chains in Babylon, that he might know Jehovah was God, and that he might bind himself to better conduct, and do no more so wickedly.† God binds us in cords of affliction, that we may open our ears to discipline, and commands us to return from iniquity.‡ David's lips uttered‖ his vows, and his mouth spoke them out intelligibly, when he was in trouble;§ so will the soul say, I am now in misery, my sins have reduced me to straits, I cannot help myself, the creatures cannot help me, God will not, till he be reconciled to my soul, reconciled he will not be, till I return to him by faith and repentance, and renew my covenant with him. O Lord, my help is only in thy name, be propitious to me in Christ, receive my soul, sanctify thy rod with covenant love, and then use thy pleasure for removing it or continuing it upon me; art not thou my covenant God? send auxiliaries from above, rid and deliver me from these mighty waters, bring my soul out of prison that I may praise thy name,¶ let it be known that thou art my refuge and portion in the land of the living, though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me, the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me, forsake not the work of thine own hands.**

(4.) Under lately received deliverances. When God hath set us at liberty it becomes us then to bind ourselves to him with stronger bonds; thus the mariners

* Ezek. xx. 37. † Isa. xlviii. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—13.
‡ Job xxxvi. 8—10. ‖ Marg. opened, that is, largely.
§ Psal. lxvi. 13, 14. ¶ Psal. cxlii. 5, 7. ** Psal. cxxxviii. 7, 8.

Jonah i. 16, when the sea ceased from its rage, and they had escaped drowning, "then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to Jehovah, and made vows;" and indeed a due sense of mercy will engage an ingenuous spirit to duty;* former deliverances put holy Ezra on solemn covenanting for future obedience; when David is consulting "what to render to the Lord for all his benefits," he resolves to give up himself to God by a fresh deed of gift, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds," Psal. cxvi. 12, 16; a double obligation calls for a double self-dedication. O my Lord, (may the soul say,) all I have is from thee, to thee I return all back; "thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling, therefore I will walk before thee in the land of the living;"† this signal mercy is one of the cords of a man to draw me nearer, and a bond of love to unite me more closely to my God,‡ when I am paying my old vows I will make new. O my soul, vow and pay unto the Lord, thy God, bring presents, (even thyself,) unto him that ought to be feared;‖ this is the best testimony of my due gratitude, yea, this self-surrender to the Lord is my mercy as well as duty, these tokens of his love to me must be answered with this return to him.

(5.) When persons are entering upon difficult services. If you be called to undertake any work that has the appearance of being too hard for you, then renew your covenant, that thereby you may put yourselves into God's hands, and engage him to be for you; thus did Jacob when he hoisted up his sails, and launched forth into the ocean of a wide world, he com-

* Ezra ix. 13. with chap. x. 19.
† Psal. cxvi. 8, 9.
‡ Hosea xi. 4.
‖ Psal. lxxvi. 11.

mitted the care of his vessel to a heavenly Pilot, and arrived at his desired haven; "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go—then shall the Lord be my God."* When Jephthah was to engage in battle against Ammon, he uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judges xi. 11; which the Holy Ghost interprets to be his vow to the Lord, ver. 35, 39; upon a similar account did Abraham lift up his hand, that is, vowed to the most high God:† thus did Asa and others when they set about church reformation;‡ and thus must thou do in managing any considerable affair for God, or for the good of thy soul. Now, Lord, you may say, I am adventuring upon a difficult and hazardous undertaking, and shall be foiled in it without special assistance from above; thou, Lord, art not engaged to help any but such as are in covenant with thee, I am thine, save me, I am now actually putting myself under thy wing, and resorting to thy glorious attributes by personally renewing my covenant with thee, and if God will be for me, who can be against me? this engagement is beyond my strength, but I fear neither men nor devils, if the omnipotent God will appear on my side.

(6.) When Christians are going about any part of God's worship, or any thing that relates to it; then is a seasonable time to renew their covenant with God. Before David made an arrangement for the ark, "he sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob," in these terms, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, till I have found out a place for the Lord;"‖ he resolves to be restless till God's ark be at rest. Thus if you be to attend upon God in any duty

* Gen. xxviii. 20—22.
† Gen. xiv. 22, 23.
‡ 2 Chron. xv. 12, 13.
‖ Psal. cxxxii. 2—5.

or ordinance, you must stir up yourselves to take hold on him, and excite all the powers of your souls to wait on him by explicit and implicit covenanting; this is the proclamation God makes, when he had spoken of the governor and nobles, whom he caused individually to draw near, *he shall approach unto me;* who shall approach? then comes the character of a true worshipper; "for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord;"* as if he had said, those who actually put themselves into a prepared frame, shall come near to me, others worship afar off; the more recently renewed the covenant, the more free is admittance to the Lord. Actual covenanting produceth actual communion; the business will go on best when our hearts are in a good frame, when our spirits are most warmed, melted, quickened, and newly devoted to God, and lie under the sense of our relation to him; I told you this is a covenanting with God by sacrifice, now, if you be for gospel sacrificing, you must engage to do it, and engage in it, thus saying: Lord, I am about to read or hear thy word, as thou commandest,† so dispose me to do; as thou holdest out mercy in a promise, so let me embrace it; I am going to seek God by prayer, O Lord, hear my vows,‡ and prayers mixt with vows; in this duty I would declare my dedication to thee, and expectation of all good from thee, Lord, communicate thyself to me by intimate communion in a covenant way.

(7.) More particularly, you must bind yourselves to God by a personal covenant when you go to partake of the Lord's supper; for in that sacred and solemn ordinance, you are to set your seal to God's covenant, as he seals it to you. "This," saith Christ of the cup, "is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many

* Jer. xxx. 21. † Ezra x. 12. ‡ Psal. lxi. 5.

for the remission of sins."* This testament is the covenant sealed by the death of the testator, and you are to subscribe it in this ordinance. Hezekiah directs the people in their preparation for the passover to yield themselves to the Lord,† and so enter into his sanctuary; thus must we do before we stretch out our hand to these sacred elements, we must subscribe with our hand to the holy covenant. It is true, that ordinance is for a commemoration of Christ's death, but it is also the communion of the body and blood of the Lord;‡ and therefore implies union to Christ, by this bond of covenant; you take God's name in vain, except you be devoted to him in covenant, nay, you are base hypocrites, if your practice answer not to your profession; you profess consent to the covenant by your using the seals, you declare your dedication to God and acceptance of him, or what do you do there? and is it not fit you should afresh be dressing yourselves in your wedding garment? A lately renewed covenant will leave a fresh stamp and impression upon your spirits; and O how comfortably and confidently may you approach the Lord's table and say, Lord, thou knowest what has been my secret engagement with thee, and now I come solemnly to own it among thy people; Lord, as thou hast given me the privy seal, so add at this time the broad seal, that I may pass unchallenged in the court of God, of conscience, and of thy church.

This is the first circumstance, which has relation to the time.

2. The next is the place, where this personal covenant should be contracted. And my advice is, that

* Matt. xxvi. 28.

† *Marg.* give the hand, that is, in covenanting, 2 Chron. xxx. 8.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 25. x. 16.

you manage this affair in some solitary place, because it concerns none but God and your own souls. It is true, you may personally covenant in a public place, and with others in any ordinance; but when you are to enter into it in a solemn manner, secrecy will be more proper: Gen. xiii. 14, "The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, lift up now thine eyes," &c. mark it, when Abram was parted from Lot, then God and he were united more closely; possibly those hot quarrels between their herdsmen had been a perturbation to Abram's spirit, and a provocation to the Lord to withdraw his Spirit, for divine revelations are usually made to sedate and quiet souls; or possibly God is well pleased with Abram's self-denying condescension to his inferior; and when they were parted God seems to say, Well, Abram, I love thy peaceable spirit; in room of Lot thy kinsman, I will now own thee as my child, and be to thee a covenanted friend, and will make good my promise to thee. This circumstance God takes notice of elsewhere, signifying how he dealt with this celebrated patriarch; Isa li. 2, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him," that is, either when he was without seed or offspring, or I separated him from his kindred and relatives, that I might contract with him a special friendship by covenant relation. But you will say, why did God thus call Abraham alone? and why should we thus enter into covenant in a solitary place? I answer,

(1.) Because it is a personal affair, and is fittest to be transacted between the heart-searching God and the sincere soul. Thou mayest in this as well as in closet prayer,* shut the door upon thee, and keep the door

* Matt. vi. 6.

of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom;* here thou mayest ransack thy heart, freely open thy bosom to God, confess such sins and wants as it is not proper another should be acquainted with. When God establisheth his covenant with thee, the scripture saith, "Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more,"† that is, in any self-justification, but thou must and wilt open thy mouth in self-condemnation; certainly the troubled heart of the returning prodigal hath something to tell his offended Father, of which he would not have the dearest friend he hath in the world to be informed.

(2.) The soul must not be disturbed in this important affair. So saith the wise man, through desire a man having separated himself seeketh and intermedleth with all wisdom,‡ or, as it is in the margin, he that separateth himself, seeketh according to his desire, and intermedleth in every business; all however comes to the same thing, it means that retired deliberation in matters of moment is necessary for making mature conclusions and managing solemn concerns. In this business of covenanting a man must call up all his inward faculties, mind, will, affections, memory, and conscience, and excite their most vigorous actings, and all little enough. The affair is great, the temple to be built is for the infinite God to dwell in, the engagement is not only for this life, but for eternity; the fort-royal of the heart is to be surrendered up to the great King upon very honourable terms; God sends his summons by conviction, the matter is to be debated by the soul within itself, it must hold a parley, and cast about to ascertain what is best to be done to attain God's glory, and save himself; in council he should sit close without disturbance, his exigencies are to be examined, the equal terms to be

* Mic. vii. 5. † Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. ‡ Prov. xviii. 1.

considered, the necessity of coming up to them concluded upon, that the soul may act deliberately, and still the tumultuous workings of heart, by its self-communing and making diligent search:* sometimes searching out the sins he has to confess, then what duty he must set about; another while asking his heart whether it be truly willing to consent? then again considering God's willingness in the promises of the scripture, and what are the terms. These things will cost many inward debates and solemn thoughts of heart, which must be conducted by soliloquy, and cannot be done in a crowd of company and business; therefore privacy is necessary.

(3.) God only can be witness of the soul's sincerity in this covenanting, therefore must the Christian set himself as in the presence of an omniscient God, who alone is privy to his exercises of heart in solitary recesses; he knoweth the way that I take, saith Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold, let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity."† I dare set myself as a glass in the sun, to be under the bright rays of the Sun of righteousness, and though I am conscious of many spots and blemishes, yet I would approve of none, but hate all. "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."‡ Sin may be inherent, it shall not be predominant: it may force itself through me, but it shall not have an undisturbed passage. "Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant, my witness is in heaven and my reward is on high; though my friends scorn me, yet mine eye poureth out tears unto God, and oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man plead-

* Psal. lxxvii. 6. † Job xxiii. 10. xxxi. 6.
‡ Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

eth for his neighbour!"* A Laban could say, "no man is with us, see God is witness,"† much more may I say so; my soul lies under the sense of thy omnipresence in these my closet retirements: thou art both witness and party in this solemn undertaking; my dearest relations know not what I am doing, but to thee alone I open and discover my heart; I ask no one's counsel or approbation, it is enough that I have the warrant and approbation of my Sovereign Lord, saying, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself,"‡ and returning to me, I receive him as my dear son, my pleasant child: yea, may the soul say, I call sun, moon, stars, trees, stones, in the absence of men to bear their testimony to this my engagement, as a dying saint said, I am sure if the posts of this bed could speak, they would testify how many delightful hours I have had with God in this room.

(4.) Because usually there is more freedom and endearedness expressed between God and the soul in solitude, than in company; so intimate friends manifest most familiarity when a third person doth not intermix with their purest streams of love. "Cause every man to go out from me,"‖ said Joseph, when he made himself known unto his brethren. Jonathan and David only were together in the wood, when they kissed, wept, embraced each other, till David exceeded,§ another time they made a covenant before the Lord in a solitary wood.¶ Thus husband and wife have the freest intercourse alone: "Come my beloved," saith the spouse, "let us go forth into the fields, let us lodge in the villages, let us get up early to the vineyards, there will I give thee my loves,"** as if she had said,

* Job xvi. 19—21. † Gen. xxxi. 47, 50. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 18—20.
‖ Gen xlv. 1. § 1 Sam. xx. 41.
¶ 1 Sam. xxiii. 16, 18. ** Song vii. 11, 12. Ubera mea.

there will I open to thee the hidden emotions of my heart, and lay before thee the tokens of my hidden affection: there will I give thee my heart, which thou callest for,* and I am sure is thy due, and my duty to give; there will I give thee my all, to thee shall my soul be united most closely in the strictest bond of a sacred covenant.

But take a caution; let it not be enough to be found sometimes alone in a secret place; see you be sincere there, a croaking frog of hypocrisy may creep into the privy chambers, even into the bed-chambers of kings,† and Christians themselves. One observes, that though the place where the duty is performed be secret, yet some are like the hen, which having deposited her egg publishes the circumstance to all around: let it be enough for thee that God is witness of thy solemn proceedings.

3. The next thing is the manner in which this personal covenant must be made. I speak not here of what is essential to a right covenanting, as that it be done with understanding, a divorce from other objects, consent of the will, a humbled heart, holy resolution, right ends, and prayer for counsel, sincerity, and strength to perform it: these were enlarged upon before when considering the preparatives to a covenant engagement: by manner here I mean, the mode, or signs, or means whereby we may testify the inward consent of the heart; these are either, professing with the tongue, or subscribing with the hand.

(1.) As it respects profession, it is fit our tongue, which is our glory, should manifest the free consent of the heart; this is an avouching the Lord to be our God:‡ O my soul, saith David, thou hast said unto the Lord, "Thou art my Lord," and again, "I will pay

* Prov. xxiii 26. † Exod. viii. 3. ‡ Deut. xxvi. 17.

thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."* It is true, there is a language of the heart, and God understands it, therefore our most solemn professions are not to inform God, but to awe our own spirits, to a reverential observance, by the solemnity of an oath: verbal professions are oft necessary before men, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation;"† all the question is whether a man may use his voice in solitary and personal covenanting? I say to affect a man's own heart, or when out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, if the place be remote enough from the ears of mortal men, it may not be unfit to utter a man's words and vows before the Lord, as Jephthah did: for a Christian may sometimes find his rising affections run over into expression, or from his experience judge it needful to move his inward feelings with his lips, and work on his dull heart, or raise his dead or drooping spirits by the affecting use of speech: or when a man desires that the due sense, lively impression, or lasting remembrance of this engagement may be preserved upon his mind, in such a case he may express his covenant with an audible voice: this I propose as matter of expediency, not of necessity; for God understands mental vows, and may accept them, and you therein.

(2.) It may be expedient that this covenant be testified by writing, according to Isa. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's," that is, verbal profession, "and another shall subscribe with his hand, unto the Lord." This is a prophecy which refers to gospel times, and it follows on a promise of an abundant effusion of the Spirit, ver. 3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,

* Psal xvi. 2. lxvi. 13, 14. Lam. iii. 24. † Rom. x. 10.

and floods upon the dry ground," which elsewhere the scripture interprets of gospel gifts and grace, so then, neither the gifts nor graces of the Spirit do hinder, but rather promote this ratification of the covenant.*

There is also a gracious promise of fruitfulness, ver. 4, "They shall spring up as the grass, as willows by the water courses." This subscription then is an effect or sign of fruitfulness: for suppose a man cannot speak, he may signify his mind by writing, as Zecharias wrote when he was struck dumb;† and it may be convenient for you to prepare and transcribe the principal parts, and terms of the new covenant, or take what others have collected and drawn up for you, and then subscribe your names with your own handwriting, and for these reasons:—

[i.] That thereby you may testify your willingness to enter into this covenant; you are volunteers, and do it [*lubentes et ex animo*] with a free-will, and cordially; behold your hand writing shews that you are not compelled, nor dragged to it against your will; thus it was with those mentioned, Ezra x. 19; they gave their hands, that they would put away their strange wives. Whether this *giving the hand* was by stretching out the hand, or subscription, is not material, it was undoubtedly a token of voluntary consent, in covenanting; for the people wept very sore, ver. 1, and being under powerful convictions, they cried out, as "thou hast said, so must we do," ver. 12; yea, they were under a sense of guilt, ver. 8; and of God's wrath, ver. 14. Now, they were as glad to be free from those strange wives, as formerly they were fond of them; therefore they voluntarily gave their hand; this shews they were in good earnest, they were not

* Isa. xxxv. 7. Joel. ii. 28. John vii. 38. Act. ii. 18.

† Zecharias, cùm loqui non potuit, scripsit. Luke i. 63.

compelled but were glad to do it; it was their free choice.

[ii.] Subscribing with the hand is for sureness and certainty; we are accustomed to say, let me have it under your hand, I will have it in black and white, and then we think we are sufficiently secure. This is the reason why men write deeds, and indentures, and bonds, and subscribe them, as it was done by Jeremiah, when he purchased of Hanameel a field in Anathoth, I subscribed the evidence, saith he, and sealed it.* This men do for greater assurance of their honest intentions to perform articles, and confirm a bargain. Thus the field in Machpelah, was made sure to Abraham for a possession;† whether writing were so antient, I dispute not, but now-a-days writing, witnesses, and seals, are all little enough for men to secure their rights, especially when they have to deal with slippery customers; and such are our hearts, that play fast and loose, especially in soul concerns; we had need to bind them fast, God gives a caution, "take heed to your spirits that you deal not treacherously,"‡ twice together, in this very business of covenanting; Neh. ix. 38, "Because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our princes, Levites and priests seal unto it;" the words are very emphatical, *covenant* is not in the original, but may be implied; the words may be thus read, we strike or engage our faith and fidelity, or secure a certainty, || that is, we give the best assurance we can of keeping our faith, or fidelity God-wards. Hence some serious, pious souls have thought fit to subscribe their names with their own blood instead of ink, which I will neither commend nor condemn; but

* Jer. xxxii. 10. † Gen. xxiii. 17, 18. ‡ Mal. ii. 15, 16.

|| כורתים אמנה Percutimus fidem, vel firmitudinem, *Meton.* causæ finalis.

see that you be deliberate, humble and self-denying in this great business, and be not too confident of shedding your blood for Christ, as Peter was, but learn to exercise faith on the blood of Christ for pardon, strength, and acceptance. It is true, some symbols may be given, as the nobles of Bohemia, when the creed was read, drew out their swords half way, shewing their readiness to hazard their lives for the faith. But let us beware of carnal confidence, and superfluous inventions.

[iii.] This writing, may be useful for plainness and intelligibleness. When a man doth but hear or utter a thing transiently, he cannot take such a full view of every matter or circumstance, as when he hath it before him, hence Hab. ii. 2, "Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." So then writing a thing legibly is the way to make it more perceptible, and intelligible. A visible writing gives advantage for more fully understanding all its contents and branches. Writing the terms of the covenant gives us leisure to view it fully, to comment upon it, and go through it from article to article, and so asking ourselves individually, what sayest thou to this? is this warranted by the word? is this thy duty or not? wilt thou consent or not? deal ingenuously, consider of it, take advice, speak thy mind, or subscribe with thy hand, as thou feelest the frame of thy heart. Thus writing may be useful.

[iv.] For perpetuity or continuance. When a thing is written, recorded, or engrossed, it becomes a living testimony to many generations. We say, any thing that is written doth remain,* thus Job saith of the articles of his faith, Job xix. 23, 25, "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and

* Litera scripta manet.

lead, in the rock for ever!" what words? "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and thus the covenanting soul would write it down as a perpetual monument, because he would have it an everlasting covenant that shall never be forgotten;* Josh. xxiv. 27, "Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord—lest you deny your God, saith Joshua:" that is, subjectively or passively a witness. So may you say to this table, this chamber, these chairs, be you witnesses; this paper, this bond under my hand, shall bear witness for me, or against me another day; let this be produced against me if ever I turn my back upon my God, and his ways. O what terror would this strike into you upon your defection from God! what tears would you drop upon this violated bond! what an awe will it beget in you to induce you to walk circumspectly! and if God assisted you in close walking, and keeping covenant; what joy, what secret solace, what grounds of thankfulness will it produce! what admiration of free grace that hath assisted you hitherto! As an antient reverend minister,† (now with God,) looked over a solemn engagement, which he entered into at Cambridge in his younger days, and which he again subscribed, reviewing with comfort such a day and year, above forty years before when it was first subscribed. Thus it may be a witness for you in time to come.

A worthy divine in a letter to me signifies his thoughts thus: "The life of this great duty, as to its practicableness, lies in pressing the great expediency and necessity of this subscribing, where it can be done; though it be not essential and absolutely necessary, it would be worth while to learn to write, if it were but their name, or they might cause some special friend to

* In perpetuam rei memoriam. Jer. l. 5. † Mr. J. A.

write that contract for them; and they might either touch the pen, or have the hand led in writing their name, as they do in other cases. The more arguments you can produce for this practice, the more effectually you set home the convictions of this great truth and duty: for men's hearts are deceitful above all things, especially in this important transaction, and will make the most frivolous and insufficient sign of their consent satisfy, as hath been often the case with parents, even Christians, engaging and covenanting for the education of their children at baptism, to give a nod with their head, when they should have fully and freely expressed their consent with their mouth. Such arguments as these seem to call for this subscribing:—

1. The Lord hath done this in his word often in reference to us.

2. This hath been the practice of the saints in scripture, as David not only consented in his heart, but professed, Psal. xvi. 2, and pledged himself with an oath, to keep God's judgments, Psal. cxix. 106.

3. This hath been the practice of the saints in our time.

4. Isa. xliv. 5. seems to be a prophecy of what was to be practised under the gospel, on the out-pouring of the Spirit.

5. This hath been Satan's way with some, that he hath engaged to him, as the young man in Luther's time.

6. Outward signs in civil and religious transactions have been used in scripture, both with the Lord and with men.

7. This puts persons upon the devoting of more time for it.

8. This makes them more serious and accurate in observing the nature and conditions of the covenant.

9. This will be the greater witness for or against, and occasions a more lively impression of its obligation, and drives the deeper conviction on the conscience, and makes it more vigorous in its actings, having that standing witness.

10. This is a more permanent example to their posterity and friends." Thus far my reverend and dear friend. You may take this practice as a consideration for your furtherance in this serious engagement, though I dare not lay too much stress upon it. All allow a liberty to persons in private, to use the best helps they can to consecrate themselves to the Lord, and (though this act of subscribing may admit of disputes,) this is all I have in view.

4. The next consideration is the helps and means to furnish us with matter and words for this transaction of personal covenanting: I shall briefly direct your attention to these four things, *reading the scripture, hearing sermons, meditating on the sacraments, and Christian conference.*

(1.) Let him that would be furnished with matter, words, and method for this solemn affair, study the Bible, where the covenant of grace is contained; the whole scripture is the old and new testament, or covenant, because therein the covenant is displayed under various dispensations; as the Mosaic pædagogy: and the Evangelical revelation; the Messiah promised in the former, exhibited in the latter. Wherever you find any branches of the new covenant laid open, single those out, write them down, and put them into method, and thereto subscribe your hand; as for example, when you read a promise, that a "virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,"* you may subscribe to the truth and importance of it,

* Isa. vii. 14.

and say, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation," that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; this is a subscribing to the truth and goodness of the general proposition, then add personal application, putting down your own name, "of whom" said the apostle "I am chief."* So when you meet with a precept, you must not only receive the good will of God,† but approve of it as acceptable to you, and consent to the law of God, that it is holy, just, and good,‡ and it is fit you square your life and actions by it; adding, by God's grace I will walk according to this rule: and to help you herein you may find it hath been practicable by believers; study threatenings against transgressors, promises to the obedient, directions for walking holily, &c.

(2.) You have plain and practical sermons and good books that may much help you in this serious transaction. There is never a sermon grounded upon scripture, but it contains something of the covenant, Isa. lv. 3, "Incline your ear, come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you"—death came in by the abuse of the ear, and life may come in by that organ well disposed and attentively engaged; yea, the grace of faith, which is our consent to covenant terms is usually conveyed by hearing the word preached:‖ "God hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,"§ therefore my advice is, if you would enter into covenant with God, you must carefully attend, labour to understand, and profitably improve sermons: be sure you remember the design and scope of every sermon: reduce what you hear to some head of divinity: what truths were there in this sermon to which God requires my assent?

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Rom. xii. 2. ‡ Rom. vii. 12, 16.
‖ Rom. x. 17. § 2 Tim. i. 10.

What duties are to be practised? What sins to be avoided? What promises to be embraced? Every duty is in some way a branch of the covenant; as even the releasing of servants is called by this name of covenant, Jer. xxxiv. 13, 14. So good books, sermons, treatises in print, of which you have great store; and some purposely, discourses on the covenant, some have even made a collection of the promises; view those, and select what you find proper to your present undertaking, and (if you can) transcribe and then subscribe it, with hand and heart: or at least speak over what you there read, as your own sense, and the very language of your hearts.

(3.) Study the sacraments or seals of the covenant. They have been called sacraments from the oath that the soldiers took when they were enlisted in the emperor's service: these seals are visible representations of the invisible grace communicated to us, and badges of our fidelity to God in covenant: go from one act to another in baptism, and the Lord's supper, make scriptural comments upon, and believing applications of every part thereof: learn something from the water in baptism, the action of the minister, the polluted state of the baptised, his purification, his admission into a new relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the privileges conveyed, the duty of the baptized to be the Lord's, &c. And so for the Lord's supper; O learn to discern the Lord's body: remember what is signified by the elements, bread and wine, named Christ's body and blood; follow all the sacramental acts in your thoughts; when the minister consecrates the elements, think how God sets apart his Son for the work of redemption: when the bread is broken, so Christ was bruised for our iniquities: when the minister gives, and you take the elements, thus God offers Christ to

me; O for a hand of faith to take Christ, an appetite for the bread of life, a due digesting of this blessed banquet! Thus may you familiarize gospel mysteries to you, and visibly discern all the branches of the covenant, even with your bodily eyes.

(4.) Improve Christian converse. Go to the religiously wise, ask counsel of such as fear God, and have experience in transactions of this nature; communicate to them your desire and design, confess your faults, beg their prayers; possibly you will find some whose hearts and cases harmonize with yours, as face answers to face in the water; they will tell you they could never get ease to their aching hearts till they took this course, they will direct you in the method they found beneficial, they will encourage you by informing you what satisfaction their souls had in taking God for their God, and devoting themselves freely to him: as David after he had made and paid his vows, cries out, "Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul:"* and then he tells you how he cried, and God answered him. Thus will gracious Christians say to you: O friend, I am glad you begin to hearken to this blessed intimation; be not discouraged, resolve upon it, it is the best bargain that ever you made, hold not off, be not afraid to give your consent, it is a delightful engagement, he is the chief of ten thousand. O come and taste, and then you will see that the Lord is good,† bind your slippery hearts to God with the strongest bonds: for my own part, saith the experienced Christian, I would not for all the world, but have made this covenant; this union hath promoted my communion with God; how familiarly hath my Lord dealt with my soul! how fixed hath my resolution been for God! methinks I have found more strength

* Psal. lxvi. 13—18. † Psal xxxiv. 8.

of grace, more power against temptation and corruption, more patience in affliction, more comfortable persuasions of God's love to my soul, since that blessed day I entered into this holy league with God. Come, friend, put your hand into God's hand, unite with him, subscribe your name to this blessed bond; this is the best use that ever it can be put to, fear not, you will never repent of this engagement, give up yourself to the Lord, and he will be your God.

CHAP. VI.

THE MATTER OR FORM OF WORDS A PERSON MAY EMPLOY IN HIS ENTERING INTO A PERSONAL COVENANT WITH THE LORD.

V. HAVING shewed in general, what covenanting is, and what this personal covenanting, and proved that it is essential to religion, also what is absolutely necessary to do it in a right manner, and particularized those considerations which may help God's people in the managing of it, I now proceed to the fifth general head, which relates to the matter or things wherein we must bind ourselves; or the form of words which may be used by the Christian, in this great and solemn affair of personal covenanting.

This is the chief part of my work, and my main design; all that I have said is but preparatory to this, which is to lay open plainly the several parts and branches of this solemn bond or covenant, which you are to enter into; that you may make use of such a form of words as may be prescribed.

But before I address myself to this prescription, let

me earnestly bespeak your consent. Alas, sirs, what do I take this pains for in writing, or you in reading this discourse, unless you be willing to set to your hand and seal? the indentures drawn between God and you, are not to be looked at, but subscribed; the matter is weighty, it is as much as your souls are worth; heaven and hell depend upon your sincere covenanting. How can you have God for your father and master, except you be his children and servants? Can a woman challenge a dowry except she be married to the man? Can you be free denizens of the New Jerusalem except you serve this blessed apprenticeship? Can you claim the benefit of this heavenly charter, unless you be enfranchised? Never imagine you shall have the mercies promised, unless you perform the conditions required. What you find in the bible is God's, what you cordially consent to becomes your's. This covenant grant is conditional, "Believe and be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned;"* God gives you liberty to put in your own name. He sends his ministers to beseech you to be friends with him, if you consent not, these lines shall be a testimony against you; advise with yourselves, consider the terms, bethink yourselves what answer you will give, now or at the great day. What answer shall we give to him that sent us? What say you, will you consent or not? What have you to object? Are not the terms equal? Is not your case necessitous? Can you make any other shift? Doth God bid you lose? He is willing to make this engagement with you, namely, he will give himself, all communicable in himself to you, upon condition you will surrender yourselves to him; is not this an important engagement, a blessed exchange? the whole world cannot afford the like; what makes you hesitate? are

* Mark xvi. 16.

you afraid God will not make it good on his part? and dare you question God's veracity or the truth of the gospel? speak out man, wilt thou give God the lie? O wretched infidel! Or dost thou fear as to reception? read the word which saith, "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."* Be it known to thee, it stands at nothing but thy unwillingness; the devil cannot, God will not hinder this engagement, if thou be truly willing; God puts in no bar; and I must tell you, that if your name be not found subscribed to this covenant, the fault is your own, you have excluded yourselves; and this will be the great inquiry in the solemn day of accounts, if you be not found enrolled among the living in Jerusalem, you are utterly undone, you must be excluded God's presence for ever; and at present, if you be not in covenant with God, you have no title to the favour of God, to Christ or his purchase, or to any one promise, no, you have no covenant right to any creature comforts, houses you live in, beds you lie on, clothes you wear, bread you eat; nay, you are every moment in danger of God's wrath falling on you, or of your dropping into hell; the matter then is of great importance. What sayest thou, reader? wilt thou resolve upon it before thou go any further? shall God have thy heart and hand? wilt thou determine to set some time apart shortly in some convenient place, and there fall to the work in good, serious earnest, first to read over the terms of the covenant, then reflect on thyself, whether thou hast submitted thereto? and then examine thy conscience and conversation to find out thy sins? wilt thou ingenuously confess them before the Lord? wilt thou importunately beg his assistance in what thou art undertaking? and wilt thou again deliberately read the articles, and ask thy heart

* John vi. 37.

whether thou dost cordially consent, and approve thy heart to God in what thou goest about? lifting up thy heart or hand towards heaven, or subscribing with thy hand, using such gestures as produce or betoken thy reverence before the Lord, with sincerity of soul. Being thus prepared and at God's footstool, wilt thou most heartily, resolvedly, unreservedly subscribe the following covenant? and I pray you observe it, that the more solemn it is, and the more conducible it will be to the great ends aimed at, that God may have the more glory thereby, in thy owning his omniscience, holiness, and faithfulness; and the more will thy spirit be touched with a holy awe of God, by the solemnity of an oath, that thou mayest be more seriously sensible of the momentous concernment of this weighty business, and be more closely knit to God in an indissoluble bond that shall never be broken. Well then, upon the hopes I have, that some at least, may prove serious, and decided in this affair, who read these lines; I shall proceed to the main part of my directions, which is to lay before you a platform of personal covenanting, which I shall draw up, as much as may be in scripture phraseology, as most unexceptionable in men's account and most acceptable in God's; and by way of prologue or introduction, you may thus make your approaches to God:—

O eternal Majesty, thou art the one only living and true God,* the everlasting King, the blessed and only Potentate, who only hast immortality, dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see,† but as the works of creation and providence do manifest thy eternal power and Godhead;‡ so thy only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who

* Jer. x. 10. † 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.
‡ Rom. i. 20, 21.

was in the bosom of the Father,* hath declared thee to us the children of men. Thou hast proclaimed thy name in the scriptures of truth,† such I believe to be thy character, and by faith see thee who art invisible,‡ an eternal, independent, and perfect Being, incomprehensible in essence, infallible in thy word, immutable in thy purpose, the only omniscient and omnipresent God, who knowest the hearts of all the children of men; all things are naked and opened unto thy eyes, O Lord, with whom I have to do in a peculiar manner at this time;‖ "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."§ I am this day about to enter into bonds of devotedness to the Lord, to oblige myself to be the Lord's by a singular vow;¶ Lord, gird me with strength, and make my way perfect;** let thy secret be with me who desire to fear thy name, and shew me thy covenant;†† thou didst vouchsafe to enter into covenant with father Abraham, and his spiritual seed, saying, "I will be thy God,"‡‡ and dost renew it in the gospel, in these words, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."‖‖‖ I thy poor prodigal child, am at last returning to thee with grief in my heart, tears in mine eyes, for my former sins, saying, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, "make me as one of thy hired servants;§§ make me like the servant whose ear was bored to the door with an awl, that I may be thy servant for ever; "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I would

* John i. 18. † Exod. xxxiv. 6. ‡ Heb. xi. 27.
‖ Heb. iv. 13. § Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. ¶ Lev. xxvii. 2.
** Psal. xviii. 32. †† Psal. xxv. 14. ‡‡ Gen. xvii. 7.
‖‖‖ Heb. viii. 10. §§ Luke xv. 18, 19.

rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* O Lord, I am coming to thee, I believe thou art, and that thou art a rewarder of them that diligently seek thee; I am now about to seek the Lord God of Israel, and to swear unto the Lord with all my heart, and with my whole desire;† O be thou found of me, and bind this slippery heart unto thee; let me experimentally know thee, that thou art the Lord, circumcise my heart to love thee, unite my heart to fear thee, assist my heart in my believing in thee, my faith is weak, if sincere, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;‡ I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,"‖ now let mine eye see thee, and my soul derive influences from thee; make good every letter and syllable of thy sacred name to my soul, I will hope in the Lord, for with Jehovah there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.§ Thou art a God hearing prayer,¶ to thee only shall the vow be made and performed, and therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.** Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee, my existence of thee, my dependance on thee, my tendency to thee, my expectation from thee.†† Lord, let me not be treacherous in my undertaking, perfidious in keeping, or slothful in pursuing the ends of this solemn covenant.

And now having set yourselves solemnly as in God's presence, and brought your hearts to a disposition prepared in some measure for approaching his glorious Majesty, and engaging in the transaction you have in

* *Marg.* I would choose rather to sit at the threshold. Psal. lxxxiv. 10. † Heb. xi. 6. 2 Chron. xv. 13. 15.
‡ Jer. xxiv. 7. Deut. xxx. 6. Psal. lxxxvi. 11. Mark ix. 24.
‖ Job xlii. 5. § Psal. cxxx. 4, 7. ¶ Psal. lxv. 1, 2.
** Psal. lvii. 1. †† Psal. xxxix. 7.

hand, you may proceed to the parts of this covenant, which are chiefly two, namely, *acceptance* and *dedication.*

First, acceptance, or embracing of what is proposed in the covenant. Now the objects presented in the covenant are twofold:—

1. Principal, *God the Father, the Son,* and *the Holy Ghost.*

2. Subordinate, or secondary objects, to be accepted, are, *divine revelations, divine injunctions, divine institutions,* and *divine dispensations.*

(1.) In your acceptance, you are to take God to be your God, who is the only true God, to love, serve, obey, and worship him, as the grand source of your hopes and happiness.

Well then, you may humbly address yourselves to God the Father, in such language as the following:—

O holy Father of mercies and God of all consolation, I this day come and bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named."* To this principle of religion I subscribe that there is one God, "and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all."† I renounce all other gods, to me "there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things."‡ Thee, O Lord, I choose to be my God in Christ, as my chief good; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.."‖ If I can but truly say, "the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance," I shall say, "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places,§ I have

* 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. iii. 14, 15.
† Eph. iv. 6.
‡ 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.
‖ Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.
§ Psal. xvi. 5, 6.

a goodly heritage: happy is the people whose God is the Lord."* When many say, who will shew us any good? I will turn me to the Lord, and say, Lord, "lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me," this, this alone, "will put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine have increased."† O Lord, thou art the Rock of ages, on thee I repose myself, as upon the rock that is higher than I;‡ thou art my rest, I will return to thee as my rest after all my painful wanderings; thou art my King and my God, yea, my exceeding joy, in thee will I boast all the day long.‖ Thy holiness is my pattern, thy wisdom is my guide, thy power is my guard, thy truth is my surety, thy justice is my defence, thy mercy my hope, thy grace and goodness my only spring of holiness and comfort. Lord, thy name is my strong tower in danger, and all thine attributes are my best inheritance. I expect no happiness but in communion with thee.

I accept thee also as my last end, the end of my hopes, my desires, my designs, the world is but an inferior good, if good in its kind; I have seen an end of all perfection;§ profits, pleasures, honours, are not worth looking at, or longing for; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life,** these are not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passeth away, and farewell to it, it is no mortal thing I breath after or aim at. I am made to glorify God, and will say hallowed be thy name; whatever become of me, I shall rejoice to see God's name highly honoured in the world. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power; my soul doth magnify the Lord."††

* Psal. cxliv. 15. † Psal. iv. 6, 7. ‡ Psal. lxi. 2.
‖ Psal. cxvi. 7. Psal. xliii. 4. xliv. 4—8.
§ Psal. cxix. 96. ** 1 John ii. 16, 17.
†† Matt. vi. 9. Rev. iv. 11. Luke i. 46.

I am resolved by the grace of God, never to mention God's titles, attributes, ordinances, word or works, but with due esteem and veneration. All that is within me shall adore and bless his holy name; I will speak of the glorious honour of his majesty;* and in all my actions, natural, civil, and religious, in eating, drinking, working, trading, hearing, praying, I design God's glory; I desire to be filled with the fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God;† yea, my soul desires that all my aims and actions may centre in this great end, namely, God's glory; if I glory in any thing it shall be in the Lord;‡ surely I will say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength—in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."‖ God forbid that I should make myself the end of my aims and actions, and so set up myself as an idol. God alone is my chief good and last end.

(2.) Accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour and medium of enjoying God. "I am," saith our dear Lord, "the way, the truth, and the life,"§ the way as priest, the truth as prophet, the life as king, under all these views you may and must accept of him; and these are offices suited to our circumstances of guilt, darkness, and bondage. And thus must you address your souls to him:—

Blessed Lord Jesus, I am a guilty malefactor, and am this day holding up my black hand at the bar of God; but I am persuaded God hath ordained and anointed his own and only Son to be a "priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedeck,"¶ and I am sure he is a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining

* Psalm. ciii. 1. Psal. cxlv. 5. † 1 Cor. x. 31. Phil. i. 11.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 31. ‖ Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Psal. cxv. 1.
§ John xiv. 6. ¶ Heb. vii. 21.

to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* He is a priest, an altar, and a sacrifice. As God-man he is mediator, interposing between flaming justice and sinning souls; and I own no mediator between God and man, but the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all;† who hath redeemed sinners from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.‡ I am satisfied with this glorious contrivance of free grace, that the word should be made flesh, dwell among us, and fulfil all righteousness by doing God's will, and laying down his life freely for his sheep and children.‖ I lay myself before him as the altar, who being God, sanctified himself as man, and by his divinity added infinite virtue to his temporary sufferings,§ to make them of infinite value, to satisfy divine justice for the sins of man: for though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God:¶ yea, he is declared to be the Son of God with power by the Spirit of holiness, "by the resurrection from the dead."** And as for his sacrifice, since it was of necessity "that this man had somewhat to offer," he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, there is the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;†† he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to "God for a sweet-smelling savour." The Messiah is cut off, but not for himself; "he gave his life a ransom for many," as a propitiation for our sins;‡‡ "for without shedding of blood is no remission:" by this blood he obtained "eternal redemption for us;" this blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel;‖‖ it brings peace with

* Heb. ii. 17 † 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. ‡ Gal. iii. 13.
‖ John i. 14. Psal. xl. 8. John x. 15. § John xvii. 19.
¶ 2 Cor. xiii. 4. ** Rom. i. 4. †† Heb. viii. 3. ix. 26. x. 10.
‡‡ Eph. v. 2. Dan. ix. 25. Matt. xx. 28. 1 John iv. 10.
‖‖ Heb. ix. 22, 23. Heb. ix. 11, 12. Heb. xii. 24.

God, pardon to sinners, pacification to troubled consciences, access to God, and eternal communion with God.* Well, since there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,† I do acquiesce in Jesus Christ only for life and righteousness, I desire to know nothing save Jesus Christ crucified; to glory in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; to count all things but loss, "yea dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness—but the righteousness which is of God by faith;‡ this is a faithful saying, the truth of it I firmly believe, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."‖ I am the worst and unworthiest of all, but a sinner, and in the right of a sinner I plead for interest in a Saviour: O that I could say, he loved me and gave himself for me; I am sure by the works of the law can no flesh be justified;§ my own righteousness cannot profit me, I flee to the Lord Jesus, the horns of the altar, the city of refuge, the brazen serpent, by him all that believe are justified from all things from which we could never be justified by the law of Moses. By him I humbly hope to receive the atonement: O my blessed Jesus, thou wast wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities, the chastisement of my peace was upon thee, and with thy stripes I hope to be healed:¶ I renounce confidence in any creature, performance, duty, gift, grace, or enlargement, and only rest my distressed soul on that "Redeemer who comes to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob."** I this day profess to

* Col. i. 20. 1 John i. 7. Heb. x. 19 22. † Act. iv. 12.
‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14. Phil. iii. 8, 9. ‖ 1 Tim. i. 15.
§ Gal. ii. 16, 20. ¶ Act. xiii. 39. Rom. v. 11. Isa. liii. 5.
** Isa. lix. 20.

believe in a betrayed, accused, reviled, condemned, crucified, raised, glorified Redeemer, and hope for pardon and heaven through his name. Amen, so be it.

I do also humbly and thankfully own, accept and retain the same blessed Jesus,* as my advocate at the right hand of God, who is able to "save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."† I am persuaded my Lord Jesus is entered into the holy places, the holy of holies, even heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:‡ there doth our new testament Aaron bear before the Lord, the names of those whom he bore on the cross, upon his shoulders for a memorial, and upon the breastplate of judgment, upon his heart; he hath also a plate of pure gold, with "Holiness to the Lord" graven upon it, continually on his forehead, for he bears the iniquity of the holy things, which true Israelites hallow.‖ Our Lord hath a golden censer, and much incense, to offer it with the prayers of all saints, "upon the golden altar before the throne."§ And if Satan the grand adversary stand at our right hand to accuse and resist us, this angel of the covenant will rebuke him, and clothe us with change of raiment; and then who can "lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? since Christ makes intercession for us.¶ O my Lord, I am daily sinning, and so provoking God, but thou sayest if any sin, we have "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." To thee I flee under my guilt, who once didst excuse thy sleeping disciples, and intercede for backsliding Peter that his faith might not fail, who in thy farewell prayer didst breathe out thy soul for the preservation of believers,

* 1 John i. 1. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Heb. ix. 24,
‖ Exod. xxviii. 12, 29, 36, 38. § Rev. viii. 3, 4.
¶ Zech. iii. 1—4. Rom. viii. 33, 34.

unity among them, thy joy in them, prevention of evil to them, further sanctification, perfection in grace, and coronation in glory.* My dear Lord Jesus, I put myself and services into the hands of my mediator, that thou mayest purify and present them to the Father. Thou carriest on the same design now thou art above, and art touched with the feeling of our infirmities, I therefore come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy;† I know the Father heareth thee always, and whatsoever thou askest of him he will give it thee.‡ Merciful Saviour, undertake to bring off this guilty soul before the throne now, and at the solemn day of judgment. I dare not use the intercession of saints and angels, having no commission so to do, and they know not my heart as my Lord Jesus doth, yea I am forbid angel worship.‖ I will henceforth worship God in "the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This is my confidence that I have in the Son of God, that whatever I ask in his name according to his will he heareth me.§ Amen; Lord, add thy Amen to this.

You are also to accept of Jesus Christ as your Prophet, and so the truth, as he is the truth in the accomplishment of the prophecies and types. God has made good the prediction of Moses: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me, him shall you hear in all things." This is the prophet mighty in deed and word, "before God and all the people." He it is that hath prevailed to open the book, and loose the seven seals thereof.¶ It

* Matt. xxvi. 41. Luke. xxii. 32. John xvii. 11—24.
† Heb. iv. 15, 16. ‡ John xi. 22, 42.
‖ Rom. viii. 27. Col. ii. 18. Rev. xxii. 8, 9. § 1 John v. 14, 15.
¶ Deut. xviii. 15. Acts. iii. 22. John vii. 40. Luke xxiv. 19. Rev. v. 5.

was the Spirit of Christ that testified beforehand in the prophets, of his own sufferings and following glory: but in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son. O what a preacher of righteousness was Jesus, never man spake like him; he taught as one having authority. O what wisdom was given him! He was anointed to preach the gospel, and he alone was both text and preacher. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Well, I will choose this Teacher sent from God as the apostle and high-priest of my profession.* I have been as a sheep going astray, but now will return to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. I will own none as rabbi and master of my conscience but him. I will hang upon his lips, and be attentive to hear him. He can speak a word in season to my wavering, doubting, weary soul,† thou, Lord, shalt be my prophet; I expect no light but from the Sun of righteousness. Thou enlightenest with reason all that come into the world, but oh let the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shine into my heart, in the face of Jesus Christ.‡ Thou art the light of the world, and I follow thee, suffer me not to walk in darkness; but let me see the light of life: give light to me that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, guide my feet in the way of peace: in thy light only shall I see light.‖ Thou who hast thy chair in heaven, teachest hearts; let me have covenant teaching from thee, I am resolved to follow the guidance of thy word and Spirit: "Then shall I behold thy face in righteousness, and

* 1 Pet. i. 11. Heb. i. 2. John vii. 46. Matt. vii. 29. Mark vi. 2. Luke iv. 18, 22. John iii. 2. Heb. iii. 1.

† 1 Pet. ii. 25. Matt. xxiii. 8—10. Luke xix. 48. Isa. l. 4.

‡ Matt. xxi. 46. Mal. iv. 2. John i. 9. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

‖ John viii. 12. Luke i. 79. Psal. xxxvi. 9.

when I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Amen, so be it.

But he that is not willing to take Christ as King, cannot have him as Priest or Prophet. Our dear Lord Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and more especially King of saints; and though his kingdom be not of this world, nor come by pompous observation, but is principally within men,* yet our Lord who is "Prince of the kings of the earth," ruleth in all the kingdoms of the world, for it is he by whom kings rule; and as King, he makes sinners willing, volunteers in the day of his power: the government is upon his shoulders,† and it must stand, yea, increase "till all his foes be made his footstool, and then he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even our Father; and when all things are put under him, God shall be all in all." Well then, my dear and blessed Sovereign King Jesus, my soul bows itself to thy just and righteous sceptre; mount thy chariot, the gospel, draw thy bow, shoot the arrows of conviction into my conscience, and conquer my heart, and make me fall under thee; ascend on high, not only into the heaven of heavens, but possess the throne in my heart, "lead captivity captive,"‡ receive gifts for, and give gifts to me a rebellious soul, that the Lord God may dwell in me, reign over me, and bring every thought within me into captivity to the obedience of Christ. I cast down my crown before thy throne, my dear Lord, as not worthy of any honour; "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power,"‖ yea,

* Psal. xvii. 15. Rev. xix. 16. xv. 3. John xviii. 36.
† Rev. i. 5. Prov. viii. 15. Psal. cx. 3. Isa. ix. 6, 7.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. Psal. xlv. 3—5. Psal. lxviii. 18.
‖ Eph. iv. 8. 2 Cor. x. 5. Rev. iv. 10, 11.

since I am one of the children of the mystical Zion, I am resolved this day, which is the day of espousals between Christ and my soul, to set the crown only upon the head of this king Solomon, my Lord Jesus, the Prince of peace. Lord, I come this day to kiss the Son with honour, homage, tribute, and adoration; take unto thee thy great power, and rule over me,* these lusts thine enemies, that would not that thou shouldest reign over me, bring them out and slay them before thee. Come, Lord, bow my will to thy will, and let all I am or have be subject to thy sceptre of righteousness. This is that king Jesus, to whom I swear fealty this day, the Lord is my judge, the Lord is my lawgiver, the Lord is my king, he will save me. Thou only art head of thy church,† yea the head over all things to the church: all power is given thee by the Father, and thou only shalt have absolute dominion over me. Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel; thou hast the key of David, thou openest and no man shutteth,‡ open the gates of my heart, "that the king of glory may come in;" my soul is longing for, and aspiring towards this blessed hope, "and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," my eyes shall see the king in his beauty.‖ Thou art gone into a far country, to receive for thyself a kingdom, and to prepare most glorious mansions for all thy subjects, thou wilt come again and receive them to thyself; thou, righteous Judge, wilt give a crown of righteousness, to such as believe in thee, and love thine appearing. "The Spirit

* Song. iii. 11. Psal. ii. 9, 12. Rev. xi. 17.
† Luke xix. 27. Isa. xxxiii. 22. Eph. v. 23.
‡ Eph. i. 22. Matt. xxviii. 18. John i. 49. Rev. iii. 7.
‖ Psal. xxiv. 7. Tit. ii. 13. Isa. xxxiii. 17.

and the bride say come," thou sayest, "I come quickly," my soul echoes, Amen, "even so come Lord Jesus."*

(3.) Whilst our dear Lord Jesus is absent from his militant church, he hath from the Father sent another paraclete, or comforter, to negotiate his great affairs here on earth, "even the Spirit of truth,"† that shall abide with his saints for ever; and the poor covenanting soul must embrace this third person of the sacred Trinity, who is really and truly God, one in essence with Father and Son, for there "are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."‡ I am sure I have need of this Holy Spirit of God, whom my dear Lord doth send from the Father, and O that I could sincerely accept of him; I take the Holy Ghost then to convince me "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." I choose him to bring the gospel to me, not in word only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit.‖ I accept the Holy Spirit to help my infirmities in prayer, and assist me with strong sighs and groans; I accept him to sanctify my offerings, and make them acceptable to God.§ I embrace the Spirit, that therewith I may receive all the fruits of the Spirit. O that my heart may be filled with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Whenever I profess my faith, I will humbly depend upon the Holy Spirit, to communicate to me in that same hour what to speak, that then calling Jesus, Lord, by the Holy Ghost, I may be accepted.¶ I own the Holy Spirit as he only who makes my bap-

* John xiv. 2, 3. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rev. xxii. 17, 20.
† John xiv. 16, 17. ‡ Acts v. 3, 4. 1 John v. 7.
‖ John xv. 26. xvi. 8. 1 Thess. i. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 4.
§ Rom. viii. 26. xv. 16. Gal. v. 22, 23.
¶ Matt. x. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xii. 3.

tism effectual to my salvation. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body; this is to be baptized with the "Holy Ghost as with fire," and this conveys to me the benefit of the Lord's supper, for we are all made to drink into one Spirit. Lord, drop down this blessed promise of the Father into my heart; let this be the divine spark that may inflame my love to God, and suffer me not to quench, but blow it up in my soul;* shed abroad thy love in my heart by the Holy Ghost; seal my soul with that holy Spirit of promise.† I take the Spirit to be my guide into all truth, let my soul be led by the Sprit; I take him to support me in the way of truth, help me to walk in the Spirit; I take him as a Spirit of grace and supplication, that I may have grace to serve God acceptably, give me the Spirit of adoption, to cry, Abba, Father.‡ Let my soul have "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ;" let every word thou speakest to me be spirit and life to my soul. Set me at liberty by thy Spirit, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.‖ Let the Spirit mortify in me the deeds of the body; witness with my spirit that I am thy child; bring all necessary truths and duties to my remembrance; uphold me with thy free Spirit, that I fall not; thus strengthen me, that I faint not; thus comfort me, that I sink not in despondency; let me be a habitation of God through the Spirit, here, and at the last day; let the same Spirit quicken my mortal body in the solemn general resurrection.§ Thus doth my soul sincerely accept of (as I am sure I need,) all the persons

* Acts i. 5. 1 Thess. v. 19. † Rom. v. 5. Eph. i. 13.
‡ John xvi. 13. Gal. v. 5, 16, 18. Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii 15.
‖ Eph. i. 17. John vi. 63. 2 Cor. iii. 17.
§ Rom. viii. 13, 16. John xiv. 26. Psal. li. 11, 12. Eph. ii. 22. Rom. viii. 11.

of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as one God, my God. Lord, ratify in heaven this my choice which I have made upon earth; "and let the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,"* be with me. Amen, even amen, and so be it.

This is the main essential part of the covenant, acceptance of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But besides this, there are some inferior, subordinate objects that the soul ought to accept, namely, *divine revelations, injunctions, institutions, dispensations.*

(1.) The believer forming a covenant engagement must thus declare himself: Lord, I do now subscribe to thy whole word and will, contained in scripture, in the books of the old and new testament, being assured that holy men of God spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: and I am sure God cannot lie or deceive, for he is goodness itself, and he cannot be deceived, being wisdom itself.† Whatever hath the stamp of God's authority, I yield full assent to, without hesitation, not conferring with flesh and blood: and if an angel from heaven "preach any other gospel," than this which I have received, I would reject it, and look on him as accursed.‡ I will also contend for this faith once delivered to the saints, and will not give place to a mortal, no not for an hour, that the truth of God may be continued, and perpetuated.‖ *Thus saith the Lord* in the old testament, and *verily, verily, I say unto you,* in the new, have equal authority. Every truth of God concerning Christ, "is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation;§ and though the Jews "require a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom," ministers preach, and

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14. † 2 Pet. i. 21. Tit. i. 2. ‡ Gal. i. 8.
‖ Jude, 3. Gal. ii. 5. § 1 Tim. i. 15.

we believe in Christ crucified, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." This gospel many have found to be "the power of God unto salvation,"* and though it is a mystery above the conception of men and angels, yet I believe what I cannot comprehend: "Manifold wisdom of God, unsearchable riches of Christ," to be admired, but cannot be traced; there are large dimensions passing human knowledge; above reason, not against it. God hath discovered these mysteries in his word, and revealed them to his saints by his Spirit;† the angels themselves are proficients in this school; there are unfathomable depths in the holy scripture, but I am sure that the judgment of God is according to truth: when I know it is the voice of the true Shepherd I must assent and comply therewith, a little child shall lead me with the line of scripture.‡ I will not be disobedient to the heavenly vision, but believe all things that are written in the law and the prophets: and being instructed in gospel truths, which are surely believed among us, I will venture my soul and eternal welfare upon them. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."‖

(2.) I also give my free consent to the equity of divine injunctions; and resolve by the grace of God to square my heart and life according to the preceptive part of his word: God forbid that I should say, concerning any part of God's revealed will, and my duty,

* 1 Cor. i. 22—24. Rom. i. 16.
† Eph. iii. 6, 8, 10, 18, 19. 1 Cor. ii. 10.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 12. Rom. ii. 2. John x. 4, 5. Isa. xi. 6.
‖ Acts xxvi. 19. xxiv. 14. Luke i. 1, 4. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

this "is a hard saying, and who can hear it? Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently," exactly, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Alas! I can keep none as I ought, but then shall "I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."* Faith in Christ is the great gospel commandment, and loving one another. "Lord I do believe, help thou my unbelief;" I do now purpose by the assistance of divine grace, to love the Lord my God, with all my heart, with all my soul, mind, and strength, and my neighbour as myself.† Lord, give me the end of the commandment, which is charity, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. And now since the grace of God hath appeared to me, I do purpose to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And since I have taken upon me the name of Christ, I resolve to depart from all iniquity,‡ I will "hide thy word in my heart, that I may not sin against thee; O teach me thy statutes; thy testimonies shall be my delight and my counsellors; stablish thy word unto thy servant who is devoted to thy fear."‖ Put thy law in my inward parts, and write it in my heart; teach me to know the Lord: "put thy fear in my heart that I may not depart from thee;" take the stony heart out of my flesh, and give me a heart of flesh; sprinkle clean water upon me; put a new heart and a new spirit within me, and cause me to walk in thy statutes.§ Separate me from a wicked world, and receive me, be a Father to me, and let me be thy child.

* John vi. 60. Psal. cxix. 4—6.
† 1 John iii. 23. Matt. xxii. 37, 38. Luke x. 27.
‡ 1 Tim. i. 5. Tit. ii. 11, 12. 2 Tim. ii. 19.
‖ Psal. cxix. 11, 12, 16, 24, 36, 38.
§ Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

Thou sayest, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, *a land of desires*, yea, a goodly heritage?* thyself answerest, "thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me." Amen My dear Lord, work what thou commandest, and then command what thou pleasest, and I will obey, whatever the flesh saith, my spirit doth consent to the law of God, that it is good; I will for ever say, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good, whatever I be.†

(3.) Divine institutions. My earnest desire is to walk before God in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Tell me, "O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon:—I will go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed my kids besides the shepherds' tents." I will follow my dear Lord "to the gardens, to the beds of spices, I will hold the king in the galleries; O bring me into the banqueting house, let thy banner over me be love." While the King of heaven sitteth at the table, "let my spikenard send forth the smell thereof."‡ I am resolved to own a gospel ministry; and encourage such pastors and teachers as God hath qualified with gifts, and sanctified with grace, and made conscientious in his work, for converting sinners, and edifying the body of Christ. I will know and own them that labour, and are over me in the Lord, esteem them highly, and obey them, according to gospel rule. I will suffer a word of caution, admonition, and exhortation, and give myself to God, and to his ministers by the will of God.‖ I will reverently esteem that sacred ordinance of baptism, and will

* *Heb.* An heritage of glory. † Jer. iii. 19. Rom. vii. 12, 16.
‡ Luke i. 6. Song i. 7, 8. vi. 1, 2. vii. 5. ii. 3, 4. i. 12.
‖ Eph. iv. 11. 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17, 22. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

endeavour to put on Christ, to be buried with him in mortification, that I may rise with him in vivification. The true laver of regeneration is renewal by the Holy Ghost; would to God I were born again, not only of water, but of the Spirit.* I did answer to the questions propounded in baptism; but oh for the answer of a good conscience toward God! Also, I dare not omit any season of duly attending my Lord at his holy table, I will keep close to the institution, prepare for it, examine myself, labour to discern the Lord's body, do it in remembrance of him, shew forth my Lord's death till he come, labour to enjoy communion with Christ, and feed upon him. But oh for a wedding garment, that I may be a worthy communicant, and go from his holy table with advantage!† Yea, there is no ordinance of God, but my soul desires to close with it. I will henceforth be more diligent in searching the scriptures and meditating in God's law, "day and night." My mouth shall speak wisdom, and my tongue talk of judgment. Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud.‡ I will "sing and give praise, and render to God the calves of my lips." Lord, I have loved "the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells." This, this is the one thing that I desire of the Lord, and this will I seek after, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple." Amen, Lord, give me a heart to perform this covenant, and the blessing of him who attends at the posts of wisdom's doors.‖

(4.) Yet further, the covenanting Christian must freely

* Gal. iii. 27. Rom. vi. 11. Col. ii. 12. Tit. iii. 5. Joh. iii. 5.
† 1 Pet. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. 1 Cor. x. 16. Matt. xxii. 5—12
‡ John v. 39. Psal. i. 2. Psal. xxxvii. 30. Psal. lv. 17.
‖ Psal. lvii. 7. Hos. xiv. 2. Psal. xxvi. 8. Psal. xxvii. 4.

welcome, and willingly submit himself to all providential dispensations. Oh! this self-denying work may prove the hardest thing the poor soul hath subscribed to. But he must, and by grace, will do it. O Lord, I am at thy disposal, as clay in the hands of the potter, "I am the work of thy hand," thou mayest use thy absolute prerogative, to make me a vessel of honour or of dishonour, in respect of this or another world; if thou condemn me, my mouth must be stopped, I have deserved it, I have not a word to reply against God: yet I have no warrant from God to express my being content to be damned, for that is a state of sin and separation from God, which I can by no means wish: nor doth my Lord delight in the "death of a sinner."* That to which I must in this my covenanting freely submit, is with respect to outward dispensations of providence, and in this I am resolved, not to think of carving or choosing for myself, but put myself into God's hands, and take my lot as it falls. Thou, Lord, art wiser than I, and fitter to rule me than I can order myself. Thou art wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against thee, and prospered? Thou takest away, who can hinder thee? who can say unto thee, what dost thou? who dare strive against thee? for thou givest not account of thy matters; thou art an absolute sovereign, and a righteous governor; thy ways are always equal: "Clouds and darkness are round about thee, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. Thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works;"† therefore I am resolved to justify the Lord when I cannot satisfy myself, and lay down this maxim, "righteous art thou

* Isa. lxiv. 8. Rom. ix. 20—22. Ezek. xviii. 32.

† Job ix. 4, 12. Job xxxiii. 13. Ezek. xviii. 25. Psal. xcvii. 2. Psal. cxlv. 17.

O Lord, when I plead with thee;" some of thy dispensations have to thy people an appearance of hard things, yet thou givest a banner to them that fear thee, and it shall some way tend to their good; therefore I will silently adore what I cannot yet comprehend: I will be dumb and not open my mouth, because thou, Lord, dost it:* I am sure thy judgments are right, and in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me; it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good; good is the word and will of the Lord, shall I receive good at God's hands, and not evil? He is my Sovereign and can do me no wrong, he is my Father and will do me no hurt; I will lay me down at his feet in all, and say, the will of the Lord be done,† the cup which my Father gives me to drink shall I not drink it? I will take up my cross and follow Christ. I have deserved more punishment than this, and therefore will accept of this as the punishment of mine iniquity.‡ Lord, scourge here, only spare me hereafter; I choose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; though it deprive me of some of my comforts, yet if this rod be for my profit that I may partake of his holiness here and glory hereafter, I am content, yea, thankful, and shall even glory in tribulations; O what a badge of honour it is to bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!|| Farewell pleasure, welcome pain for my Lord; if my dear Lord will strengthen me by his grace, I will endure any thing according to his pleasure, and for his sake: Lord, here cut, here burn, only spare me for eternity; do what

* Jer. xii. 1. Psal. lx. 3, 4. Rom. viii. 28. Psal. xxxix. 9.
† Psal. cxix. 75. 2 Kings xx. 19. Job i. 21. ii. 10. Acts xxi. 14.
‡ John xviii 11. Ezra ix. 13. Lev. xxvi. 41.
|| Heb. xi. 25 Heb. xii. 6, 10. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Gal. vi. 17.

thou pleasest with me; if thou have no delight to communicate to me temporal mercies and spiritual privileges, yet if thou wilt be my God I will say, "here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."*

CHAP. IX.

THE FORM OF A PERSON'S DEDICATING HIMSELF AND ALL THAT HE HATH TO THE LORD.

I COME now to the second part of a covenant engagement, which consists in *dedication*. This is as necessary as the former, that the covenanted soul should make a deed of gift, and by an absolute resignation to God, should voluntarily subscribe himself to be the Lord's, as a bored servant, as a listed soldier, as a married wife, wherein the terms upon record are, "Thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee," Hos. iii. 3.

We must dedicate *what we are*, and *all that we have*.

The dedication of ourselves is twofold: we should dedicate the *soul with its faculties, and the body with its members*.

I shall briefly advert to these, and so direct covenanting souls in their self-dedication to the Lord, both in general and particularly.

First, then you may thus lay yourselves before the Lord:—

Glorious Jehovah, I do this day lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most High God, possessor of heaven and

* 2 Sam. xv. 26.

earth, resolving by thy grace to give up myself unto thee, and that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, of any thing that is thine to myself, or alienate it to any other; * my person is thine, and I will be thine; nothing that thou givest me can please me without thyself, and nothing I can give thee can please thee without myself;† thou comest to solicit me, and thou shalt have me, thou art not satisfied so much with my goods, duties, or enjoyments, as with myself. O Lord, I am thine and will be thine, ‡ no mortal creature can lay claim to me; I am thine by creation, redemption, and sanctification, and now I devote myself to thee by a voluntary dedication, at this instant, without delay, cordially without dissembling, universally without reserves, and perpetually without revocation. Satan would claim a title to me, because of his long possession—the world, because of its near alliance to me—the flesh as being part of myself, but I this day withdraw myself and service from all others, and give up myself to thee; I have destroyed myself, but in thee is my help; vain is the help of man, I cannot help myself, but with thee the fatherless find mercy. || Lord, I am devoted to thy fear, I am this day making a singular vow that my person may be the Lord's; would to God I could be a devoted thing, holy unto the Lord! § Thou once didst make me as the clay, poured me out as milk, curdled me like cheese: why, now, Lord, still I am the clay and thou art the potter, I am the work of thy hands, thou hast me upon the wheel:¶ O that free grace may frame me a vessel of mercy, filled with the divine supplies of saving grace;

* Gen. xiv. 22, 23. † Non mea sed me. ‡ Ps. cxix. 94.
|| Hos. xiii. 9. Psal. lx. 11. Hos. xiv. 2, 3.
§ Psal. cxix. 38. Lev. xxvii. 2, 28.
¶ Job x. 9, 10. Isa. lxiv. 8. Jer. xviii. 3.

work me up for heaven, and make me meet for the inheritance in light; cast me in the mould of gospel doctrine; change me more and more into the image of God, yea, from glory to glory; let me belong to the class of Nethinim, let me be a true Nazarite, devoted to God; that I may give myself to prayer, and be in the fear of the Lord, all the day long; that as Anna of old, I may not depart from his temple, but serve the Lord with fastings and prayers, night and day. * This and all that I am, do I owe to my dear Lord, for I am bought with a price, therefore I am resolved to glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's.†

1. I bring this immortal spark called the soul, this pearl, this jewel, this noblest part of myself, and lay it at thy sacred feet; it is fit it should be thine, for thou art the Father of spirits, the God of the spirits of all flesh.‡ I bring my soul to thee, it is spoiled, deprived of thine image, Lord, repair it, that I may again bear the image of the heavenly; I have defiled it, purify my soul, both by sanctification and justification, that I may be whiter than snow; I have wounded it, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee; I have weakened it, I bring it to thee, to strengthen me with strength in my soul; yea, I have struck it dead by sinning, quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of prison. || I bring this soul of mine to do homage to its Master, the King of heaven; I will solemnly charge it, saying, my soul, wait thou only upon God, and truly my soul waiteth upon God, and is silent, hushed, and hearken-

* Rom. ix. 23. 2 Cor. v. 5. Col. i. 12. Rom vi. 17. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Numb. vi. 2. Psal. cix. 4. Prov. xxiii. 17. Luke ii. 37.
† 1 Cor. vi. 20. ‡ Heb. xii. 9. Numb. xvi. 22.
|| 1 Cor. xv. 49. Psal. li. 7. xli. 4. cxxxviii. 3. cxliii. 11.

ing for either a word of command, or an answer of prayer. I will pray with my spirit, and worship God in spirit and in truth; if I praise God, my soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Saviour. In every duty I perform, I will set my heart and my soul to seek the Lord my God.* Upon God will I wait all the day long, and all my days; I will give up my soul to God that it may centre in him, and will say, return unto thy rest, O my soul, it can find no settlement or satisfaction any where else; the Lord is my portion, saith my soul,† God only can satiate the weary soul, and replenish every sorrowful soul; many perplexing thoughts work within me, in the midst of all I will have recourse to God; O that thy comforts might delight my soul! ‡ O happy were my tortured soul, if it could get ease in the bosom of my dear Lord! And when this immortal soul must depart out of this shattered and decaying frame, I will commend my soul and spirit into the hands of God, he will receive it, for he is a faithful Creator, and my gracious Father in Christ. || I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day; thus do I daily put my precious soul into the hands of God, Lord, accept it. Amen.§

2. With particular dedication. The believer must devote all the powers and faculties of this precious soul to God, in this manner: Lord, my mind is corrupted and defiled, I put it into thy hands to be cleans-

* Psalm lxii. 1, 5. 1 Cor. xiv. 15. John iv. 24. Luke i. 46, 47. 1 Chron. xxii. 19.

† Ps. cxvi. 7. Lam. iii. 24. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 25. Ps. xciv. 19.

|| Psal. xxxi. 5. xlix. 15. 1 Pet. iv. 19.

§ Luke xxiii. 46. 2 Tim. i. 12.

ed; O renew me in the spirit of my mind, my understanding is dark, let the eyes of my understanding be enlightened. O what a wandering heart have I, Lord, fix it upon thee, and some profitable object; renew a constant spirit within me; there is a baneful enmity in my mind to God, and alienation by wicked works, now at last reconcile my mind and whole soul to thyself and goodness.* Lord, I will do what I can to bring this mind to thee, that thou mayest rectify it; thou hast placed in me a noble faculty of conscience, which I am resolved shall be ruled by no dictates of man, but by the rule of thy holy word. I may lay my body as the ground to them that go over, but if they say to my soul or conscience, bow down, that we may go over, they must excuse me;† by the grace of God I will keep my conscience clear for him, without offence towards God and man;‡ it acts as God's vicegerent, and to him only must it give an account, I pass not under man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self, there is a supreme judge whom conscience shall keep in view, that God the Holy Ghost may bear witness with my conscience, that my heart may not reproach me as long as I live, but witness for me at death, with the testimony of a good conscience.‖ Lord, thou hast given me a self-communing faculty, this candle of the Lord, that thereby I may search into the inward parts of the belly; God almighty assist me in the due improvement of this important faculty, to commune with mine own heart,§ and make diligent search, and let every searching preacher commend himself to my conscience in the sight of God,¶ and let my conscience echo

* Eph. iv. 23. i. 18. Psal. li. 10. Col. i. 21.
† Isa. li. 23. ‡ Acts xxiv. 16.
‖ 1 Cor. iv. 3. Rom. ix. 1. Job xxvii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 12.
§ Prov. xx. 27. Psal. lxxvii. 6. ¶ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

back to every divine truth, that my heart not condemning me, I may have confidence towards God.* My memory also, O Lord, I give up to thee; let that be sanctified and strengthened, to be retentive of divine and spiritual things. O that I could remember my Creator in the days of my youth, and that every day I may set God before mine eyes;† I purpose this day to forget trifles and vanity, help me with that art of forgetfulness, but let the Holy Ghost bring the things of God to my remembrance; I am resolved to remember my sins, that I may be ashamed of them, and thy mercies that I may be thankful, thy marvellous works also shall not slip from me. But O that my heart were as the ark of the covenant, wherein were the tables of the law.‡ Lord, let me never be regardless of the things announced by the gospel, but let me give more diligent heed, lest at any time I let them slip, and so be in danger of believing in vain. Lord, what is of use to my soul do thou keep for me, and bring to my mind when I have most special occasion for it. As for my will, that ungovernable faculty, and my affections, which are the acts or movements of my will, my soul desires that they may be directed to thee, and that thou mayest have the management of them. My Lord Jesus came from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; much more must I say so:‖ Lord, my own wilful will hath ruined me, cure me of this stubbornness, cross my forward will, and conquer it by an act of thy power; give me a willing mind, make me willing and obedient;§ thou

* 1 John iii. 21. † Eccl. xii. 1. Psal. xvi. 8.
‡ John xiv. 26. Ezek. xvi. 61. Psal. cv. 5. Heb. ix. 4.
‖ Heb. ii. 1. 1 Cor. xv. 2. John vi. 38.
§ Hos. xiii. 9. Psal. cx. 3. 2 Cor. viii. 12. Isa. i. 19.

only must work in me both to will and to do; my desire is to choose the right object, and then cleave unto God with purpose of heart; Lord, confirm this honest resolution within me.* As for my affections, I am resolved to place them no where but upon thyself, I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, with my whole strength and most lively affection; thy word is very pure, therefore doth thy servant love it; I love thy house, thy saints, and every thing that bears thine image. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" my hope shall be placed only on God;† O that I could gird up the loins of my mind and hope to the end; I will delight myself in the Lord, which is both my duty and my privilege. Lord, make me sit down under thy shadow with great delight, and let thy fruit be sweet to my taste.‡ And with respect to my feelings and passions of an opposite description, they also shall be employed for thee in grieving for, hating and fleeing from what is in opposition to thee, since I profess my love to thee I will hate evil, even every false way; O that I could be angry and not sin, by being angry at sin; O that I could behold transgressors and be grieved. I will endeavour after godly sorrow that may bring forth repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. I will study all those decisive evidences and properties of this godly sorrow, pray for them, and endeavour after them, namely, carefulness, clearing of myself, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and revenge.‖ O that my soul might be weaned from the world, as a weaned child; and that I could

* Phil. ii. 13. Luke x. 42. Acts xi. 23.
† Psal. xviii. 1. xxvi. 8. Psal. xlii. 1, 2, 5.
‡ 1 Pet. i. 13. Psal. xxxvii. 4. Isa. lviii. 14. Song. ii. 3.
‖ Psal. xcvii. 10. cxix. 104, 158. Eph. iv. 26. 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

suck and be satisfied at the breasts of consolation; where my treasure is, there shall my heart be.* Amen, so be it. Lord, confirm these breathings of my soul.

2. In reference to your bodies, you are bound also to give them up to the Lord, both generally and particularly, thus:—

O Lord, I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, I was curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth, in thy book were all my members written; thou art he that took me out of the womb, and by thee have I been holden up from the womb, therefore I will present my body a living sacrifice, which is but a reasonable service,† Lord, make it holy, and thus acceptable to God, make it a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost; my desire is that Christ may be magnified, God glorified in my body, living and dying; I resolve to keep under my body, and bring it into subjection to thee my Lord, and cleanse myself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit:‡ for fleshly lusts war against the soul; I will possess my vessel in sanctification and honour; it is true, bodily exercise profiteth little, and may consist with a form of godliness, but O that my spirit, soul, and body were wholly sanctified, and so presented blameless at the coming of my Lord Jesus, "who shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body."‖ Which that it may,

I will devote all the members of it to thy service and glory: my tongue shall speak of the things I have made touching my heavenly King, and be as the pen

* Psalm cxxxi. 2. Isa. lxvi. 11. Matt. vi. 21.
† Psalm cxxxix. 14—16. xxii. 9. lxxi. 6. Rom. xii. 1.
‡ 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19, 20. Phil. i. 20. 1 Cor. ix. 27. 2 Cor. vii. 1.
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 11. 1 Thess. iv. 4. v. 23. Phil. iii. 21.

of a ready writer; only I put the government of my mouth into thy hands, for though I may say, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue, yea, though I keep my mouth as with a bridle, yet I am afraid I shall speak unadvisedly, unless thou, Lord, set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress: God forbid that corrupt communication should ever proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may glorify God, and minister grace to the hearers.* I am resolved to rule my palate, and not to make provisions to fulfill the lusts of the flesh; nay, rather to put a knife to my throat, if I feel myself given to appetite, and not so much as look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, lest being bewitched by it, I be drunk with wine wherein is excess.† I vow this day against chambering, wantonness, strife, envy, or misusing any of my bodily members to make them instruments of unrighteousness to iniquity; no, I will now yield my members servants to righteousness unto holiness; yea, if God call me to it, I will yield my body to the flames rather than serve or worship any god, save my own God; my hands will I wash in innocence, and compass thine altar; O Lord, I will lift up my heart with my hands to thee in the heavens;‡ O that I could lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting! I will keep my feet when I go to the house of God; yea, I will ponder the path of my feet, that all my ways may be established.|| Lord, suffer me

* Psalm xxxix. 1. cvi. 33. cxli. 3. xvii. 3. Eph. iv. 29. Rom. xv. 6.

† Rom. xiii. 14. Prov. xxiii. 2, 31. Eph. v. 18.

‡ Rom. vi. 19. Dan. iii. 28. Psalm xxvi. 6. Lam. iii. 41.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 8. Eccles. v. 1. Prov. iv. 26, 27. *Marg.* ordered aright.

not to turn to the right hand nor to the left, remove my foot from evil, but let me still make straight paths to my feet, and walk in the ways of uprightness. O what a wandering eye have I? Lord, turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; O that mine eyes might be ever towards the Lord! I will look to my Maker, and mine eyes shall have respect to the holy one of Israel.* I will incline mine ear to discipline, and hear what the Lord will speak; thou sayest, hear and thy soul shall live; Lord, bore mine ear through with an awl to the door of thy house, that I may serve thee for ever; let me be deaf to Satan's enchantments, and sinners' allurements, but always open to a divine call, and what other bodily members I have, they shall be for thy service and glory.† Lord, give me strength to make good this vow to be a Nazarite to the Lord, and perpetually to observe this covenant.

Secondly, As you must give up yourselves, your souls, and bodies to the Lord, so you must dedicate what you have to the Lord, which may be considered as embracing *your relations*, and *your concerns of a temporal nature.*

1. You must give up to God your relations to which you have any title or interest, so far as your authority or influence extends; you must even give up yourselves to God in that relation wherein you stand to others. I shall give a sketch of the different relations of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, minister and people.

1. Lord, thou hast made me an husband. I will love my wife as my own body, and be entirely united to her, and not be bitter against her, nor forsake her;

* Heb. xii. 13, 14. Psalm cxix. 37. ci. 3. xxv. 15. Isa. xvii. 7.
† Job xxxvi. 10. Isa. lv. 3. Exod. xxi. 6. Prov. i. 10.

I am resolved to dwell with her according to knowledge, to instruct her, pray for her and with her, and O that she may be thine, and that we both may be heirs together of the grace of life! Thou gavest me my wife, I will give her back to thee; if thou continue her to me, I will bless thee; if thou take her, I will not sorrow as one without hope; but as I have given her back to thee upon my knees, and while she is with me, I will be as if I had none, and when thou takest her, I shall have all made up in thee, my dear Lord.* Or, thou hast made me a wife, and I shall submit myself to my own husband in the Lord, if he be not won to God by the word, I will endeavour to win him by my humble subjection and holy conversation. O for an ornament of a meek and quiet spirit! O that I were a daughter of Sarah in doing well, that though I be of a timorous nature, yet I may not be afraid with any amazement; yea give me such a spirit as Manoah's wife, to hold up the feeble hands of my fainting husband. God forbid I should be a snare to my husband; no, Solomon's virtuous woman shall be my pattern, and I will do him good, and not evil all the days of his life.† Being a father or mother, and God having given me children, Lord, teach me what I shall do for my child, how I shall order it, how I shall do unto it; it is thine more than mine, I dedicate it to thee, my child is a loan lent to the Lord, as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord; I devote my poor child to thee in the ordinance of baptism, since the promise is made to me and to my seed; I will pray for them, and instruct them, in the way of the Lord,‡ yea, I will com-

* Eph. v. 28, 31. Col. iii. 19. 1 Cor vii. 11. 1 Pet. iii. 7. Gen. ii. 18. 1 Thess. iv. 13. 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

† Eph. v. 22. 1 Pet. iii. 1—6. Judg. xiii. 23. Prov. xxxi. 10.

‡ Judg. xiii. 8, 12. 1 Sam. i. 28. Acts ii. 39. Prov. xxii. 6.

mand my children and household after me; and O that they may keep the way of the Lord! If they die I will say, "the Lord gives, and takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." If I die, and must leave them, I will leave my fatherless children to God, they are the Lord's heritage and reward.* Being a child, I will obey my parents in the Lord, honour father and mother, and be subject to them, as my Lord was to his parents; and according to my ability and their necessity, I will learn to requite my parents; if I die, I will take care that they be provided for as David did,† and my Lord Jesus, who committed his surviving mother to the guardianship of the beloved disciple. O that my parents and I might meet in heaven! Being a master and God having given me servants, I will endeavour that they may be all spiritually circumcised, and trained up for God, as his soldiers and servants in the spiritual warfare. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way shall serve me, but he that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." I will give to my servants that which is just and equal—and continue in prayer with them and for them. And O that all under my shadow might return to the Lord!‡ Being a servant, I will first be Christ's servant, and God forbid that I should be a slave to men's passions, yet in all lawful things I will be subject to my master with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; with good will I shall do him service, as to the Lord and not merely to man; I will be obedient,

* Gen. xviii. 19. Job i. 21. Jer. xlix 11. Psal. cxxvii. 3.
† Eph. vi. 1, 2. Luke ii. 51. 1 Tim. v. 4. 1 Sam. xxii. 3.
‡ John xix. 27. Gen. xvii. 13. xiv. 14. Psalm ci. 1—6. Col. iv. 1, 2. Hos. xiv. 7.

and please him well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity. Lord, help me herein to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* In the office of a magistrate, I will fear God, love truth, hate covetousness, execute judgment and justice impartially, without respect of persons, defend the poor and fatherless, and do justice to the afflicted and needy. I will love truth and peace, and not be a terror to good works, but to evil; remembering to whom I must give an account.† As a subject, and an inferior, I will behave myself with all reverence and due subjection, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake, "rendering tribute to whom tribute is due; as I must give to God the things that are God's, so I will give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." I will pray for the king and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. "I will not curse the king, no not in my bed chamber, nor speak evil of the ruler of the people." I do purpose by God's grace to be quiet and to do my own business, that whoever may watch for occasion, may find none against me, save concerning the law of my God. God give me wisdom in this.‡ Bearing the character of a minister of the gospel, O what a charge is laid upon me! I will study the necessary qualifications for that office, and the faithful discharge of it; I will study to be blameless, vigilant, sober, apt to teach; I will meditate on the things of religion, give myself wholly to them, travail in birth that Christ may be formed in the hearts of sinners, and feed Christ's lambs and sheep. I will study to be

* 1 Cor. vii. 22, 23. 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19. Eph. vi. 7. Tit. ii. 9, 10.

† Exod. xviii. 21. Psal. lxxxii. 2, 3. Zech. viii. 19. Rom. xiii. 3.

‡ Rom. xiii. 1, 5—7. Luke xx. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 2. Eccl. x. 20. Acts xxiii. 5. 1 Thess. iv. 11. Dan. vi. 5.

skilful and faithful; God Almighty, make me successful in my Lord's work.* Being a hearer, I will join with God's people in all ordinances, and "continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and christian fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayer." I will know and esteem them highly whom God hath set over me, who watch for my soul, I will endeavour to edify the saints, and do what I can to promote peace amongst the servants of God;† and O that I could do some good to worldly-minded neighbours, by my discourse with them and prayers for them; that though they are apt to speak evil of me, as an evil doer, they may by my good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.‡ I am resolved by the assistance of God's grace to deny myself, as my Lord did, and to please my neighbour for his good to edification. Though faith hath made me a freeman, yet love shall make me all men's servant, according to the rule by love, serve one another.‖ Lord, strengthen me by thy grace to perform all these vows, and solemn engagements to thee, and to others for thy sake.

2. You must also dedicate and give up all your concerns to the Lord; and in the first place, your property in such terms as these:—O Lord, whatever silver, or gold, or worldly possessions I have, all is thine, it is thou that gavest me power to get wealth, if thou callest for part, or all of what I have, thou art welcome to it, "I will offer willingly to the Lord for the service of thy house—for all things come of thee, and of thine own do I give thee;" the silver is thine, and the gold is thine,§ it is fit it should be for thy use, when thou

* 1 Tim. iii. 2—5. 1 Tim. iv. 15. Gal. iv. 19. John xxi. 15.
† Acts ii. 42. 1 Thess. v. 11—14. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 12.
‖ Rom. xv. 1—3. Gal. v. 13.
§ Deut. viii. 18. 1 Chron. xxix. 3—14. Hag. ii. 8.

callest for it; if riches increase, God forbid that I should set my heart thereon; nay, of all that thou hast given me I will surely give the tenth unto thee; my choicest merchandize shall be holiness to the Lord, and shall be procured for them that dwell before the Lord, or if thou command I will forsake all and follow thee; grant O Lord, self-denial and strength.* And with respect to any credit or honour that I have, whatever it is, I am content to vail all before the glorious Jehovah; let my Lord increase though I decrease; only let me have a name in God's house, and be written among the living in Jerusalem, then I shall be well content to be small and despised, yea, to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things; though men revile me, persecute, and say all manner of evil against me, so it be falsely, and for Christ's sake, I will rejoice and be exceeding glad, hoping for honour that comes from God, and a great reward in heaven; let God stain the pride of my glory, and let the Lord alone be exalted this day.† As for my house and habitation, I will sing a song at the dedication of it to the Lord; let my Lord send his ministers to visit it, let their peace rest upon it, I will not only bid them welcome, but constrain them to come in, as they judge me faithful to the Lord; I will give myself and house to hospitality, I am sure it cannot be better seasoned and blessed than with the presence and prayers of God's servants: O that my house were a house of prayer, an hospital to the poor, and a common inn for the church of God.‡ And in reference to all my other accommodations, food, fires,

* Psal. lxii. 10. Gen. xxviii. 22. Isa. xxiii. 18. Matt. xix. 27.

† John iii. 30. Isa. lvi. 5. Isa. iv. 3. Psal. cxix. 141. 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. Matt. v. 11, 12. John v. 44. Isa. ii. 11. xxiii. 9.

‡ Psal. xxx. title. Luke x. 6. Acts xvi. 14, 15 Rom. xii. 13. 1 Tim. v. 10. Job xxxi. 32. Rom. xvi. 23.

bed, raiment; I here, Lord, acknowledge thee in them, and return them back again to thee; my daily bread is at thy disposal, "Man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." God's loving kindness is better than life, and all the comforts of life; many say, "who will shew us any good?" Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* I am content to suffer the loss of all things that I may win Christ: farewell necessaries for the body, when set in competition with the one thing needful for the soul. I would willingly, yea, joyfully take the spoiling of my goods for that better and enduring substance in heaven. I will take no thought for the outward man, since my heavenly Father knows what things I have need of:† I have been greatly concerned about those apparently severe terms upon which I must be thy disciple; they are the words of my dear Lord, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;" another scripture saith, "he is not worthy of me."‡ But now, Lord, I understand it of preferring thyself above all relations, and concerns, so as to part with all when standing in competition with Christ: now at last my heart is willing, I hope I can say, through grace I am truly willing to forego the dearest things for thee, and to subject all my concerns to thee; Lord, thou that knowest the hearts of the children of men, look into my heart, and if thou discover any unsoundness in me remove it away, and pardon me: if

* Deut. viii. 3. Psal. lxiii. 3. Psal. iv. 6, 7.

† Phil. iii. 8. Luke x. 42. Heb. x. 34. Matt. vi. 25, 32. Luke xiv. 26. Matt. x. 37, 38.

my heart be indeed sincere, ratify that in heaven which I have been doing this day upon earth, and give me grace to perform my vows, and comfort in reviewing this day's exercise. Amen, amen. Even so it is, and so be it.

CHAP. X.

SEVERAL OBJECTIONS AGAINST THIS COURSE OF ENTERING INTO A COVENANT ENGAGEMENT WITH GOD, BRIEFLY ANSWERED.

VI. My next attempt is to answer those objections, which carnal hearts, or carnality in the best hearts are apt to make against this practice; for it cannot be expected that this novel, or uncouth practice, so palpably against the devil's interest in the world, should go forward, but the devil will raise up all the militia of hell, and muster his most cunning sophistries to militate against it; when he sees any of his followers professedly deserting his colours, going over to the camp of Immanuel, and solemnly swearing allegiance to their true and rightful Sovereign, he makes head against them as Pharaoh pursued Israel of old, to bring them back, or make them stumble in their attempt, or to torment them about the lawfulness or fitness of this undertaking. The following are some objections supposed to militate against the practice and the manner recommended:

1. *Obj.* You will say, are none real saints but such as subscribe to such a form of words? Surely then there are none or very few genuine saints; this is a

novel invention, and it is a rare thing for Christians to take this course. I answer,

1. The thing is not new, though the method or manner prescribed seem to be new; there are no real converts but they have virtually and implicitly entered into this covenant, if they have not done it formally in this mode or manner; yea, there is never a duty or ordinance, but the Christian doth renew this engagement, for substance, if indeed he attend God's worship aright; whenever you have to do immediately with God, you hear God speak to you, and you speak to him as your covenant God; and more particularly you renew it in the Lord's supper.

2. Several have prescribed methods for conducting transactions of this nature, and such directions have found a good reception amongst serious souls, and none have reason to challenge or quarrel with what may facilitate their undertaking. If thou hast a mind to be the Lord's, or to have God to be thy God, thou wilt be glad of a hand to guide thee to him, and the more solemnly it is done, the better doth the sincere Christian like it; for he finds that his treacherous heart would gladly shuffle, and trifle about it.

2. *Obj.* But you confound us with so many particulars, and with such a vast collection of scriptures, we can read scriptures in the Bible, what needs all this repeating of texts? I answer,

1. Sincere Christians best relish scripture language, wherein they are or ought to be most employed, and delighted, meditating therein day and night; it is a sad symptom of a depraved heart, or depravity in the heart, to nauseate scripture dialect; however it is fit that we bring scripture authority with us, God will not own any thing but what hath his stamp upon it, conscience must be satisfied that there is a warrant from

God for what is offered to God, lest he say "Who required this at your hands?"*

2. Though I have taken some pains to collect these pertinent texts, yet I would not restrict you to the words and syllables; after you have read the collection over, and are satisfied respecting the grounds for every part of your duty, you may sum up the whole in your own words, and after transcribing the sense and meaning as briefly as you think fit, you may subscribe it; or if you think fit to take it at this length, you may divide it for several times, and take one branch at one time and another at another, and subscribe it by parcels, but be serious and deliberate in what you do: only I advise you first to read it over distinctly, examine the scripture proofs, spend some time in prayer, call in divine aid, and in the name and strength of Christ enter upon it.

3. *Obj.* But why should I or any man undertake to covenant to do that which we cannot do? Can any man perfectly perform all these beforementioned branches of the covenant? And why should I think to do that? Besides this, you bring us back to the covenant of works, which no man living can keep.

1. *Answ.* God commands us to keep his precepts diligently, or exactly. He hath not lost his authority over us, though we have lost our ability to obey completely; and though we cannot keep any command perfectly, yet we must have respect to all God's commandments, else we shall be ashamed:† as in the new covenant there is something that God promiseth, so there is something that he requireth:‡ and therefore the new covenant is called a law, "even the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27, which some call a remedial law, as bringing in the great commandment of believing and con-

* Isa. i. 12. † Psal. cxix. 4, 6. ‡ 1 John iii. 23.

senting to God's terms, in heart and profession: this becomes a formal actual covenanting, and whether we consent or not, we are bound to obey God, but our engagement adds a new obligation.

2. We must distinguish between the legal and evangelical observance of the terms of the covenant. None since the fall can keep the whole, no, nor any of God's commandments, in a strict legal sense, but evangelically, all real saints do keep them, when they do not, and dare not, wilfully omit observing whatever God hath made their duty; it is true, no man ought to promise impossibilities, namely, to observe all God's will and requirements, absolutely, without the least failure or defect, "for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. If we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* So we cannot bind ourselves, not to sin at all, but we may bind ourselves,

(1.) To a desire, and endeavour to pursue and practice holiness universally, without reserve, restriction, or limitation.

(2.) To avoid this or that particular sin, and to practice this or that particular duty.

(3.) To endeavour after a higher pitch of holiness, than we have hitherto attained.

(4.) To be more serious and sincere in the ways of God, with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, and to study diligently a conformity to the image of God, and compliance with his will.

4. *Obj.* But if I should thus enter into covenant, what am I better? How can I tell whether God will accept of me or not, especially considering my defective obedience, and many failings? What reason have I

* Eccl. vii. 20. 1 John i. 8.

to think that God will dispense with me, when he was so strict with Adam, renouncing him for one single failure?

1. *Answ.* Dost thou profess thyself a Christian, and art thou yet an infidel? Hath God taken so much pains to confirm this covenant, (as I have demonstrated in my treatise on "The Sure Mercies of David,") and yet dost thou question his veracity? For shame, man, never speak such a word; what abundance hath God said and done to assure thee of his willingness to accept returning sinners; and yet dost thou doubt? What falsehood or iniquity hast thou found in God? * Darest thou call in question the whole gospel? or charge the God of truth as a liar or dissembler? Dost thou suspect that he will deceive thee? Doth he not really intend what he saith? Did ever any complain that though they were willing, God was not? Hath he not said, "that those that come unto him he will in no wise cast out?"† that is, either keep out such as truly come, or cast out such as are come; and darest thou not trust him? Dost thou not by unbelief make God a liar? For shame, man, never suspect the faithful God to be such an impostor;‡ thou mayest trust him for admittance and continuance in the covenant relation to the end.

2. As for the case of Adam, it is true God cast him off and his posterity for eating the forbidden fruit, which though it was only a single act, yet was a complex evil; but there is a great difference between Adam, and gospel believers, under the new covenant dispensation; for though God rejected him upon disobedience, yet he accepts sincere souls now, and their integrity and uprightness preserve them from final apostacy and

* Jer. ii. 5. † John vi. 37. ‡ 1 John v. 10.

rejection. I would rather express this in the words of that worthy divine; Mr. Gurnal, Christian Armour, part 2. page 89, who thus expresseth himself:—

Quest. "But here it may be asked, how comes God to be so favourable in the covenant of the gospel, to accept of an obedience so imperfect at his saints' hands, who was so strict with Adam in the first, that the least failing, though but once 'scaping him was to be accounted unpardonable?"

"I reply, the resolution of this question includes these two particulars:—"

(1.) "In the covenant God made with mankind in Adam, there was no sponsor or surety to stand bound to God for man's performance of his part in the covenant, which was perfect obedience, and therefore God could do no other but stand strictly with him, because he had none else, from whom he might recover his glory, and thereby pay himself for the wrong man's default might do him. But in the gospel covenant there is a surety, Christ the righteous, who stands responsible to God for all the defaults and failings which occur in the Christian's course; the Lord Jesus doth not only take upon him to discharge the vast sums of those sins, which he finds them charged with before conversion, but for all those dribbling debts, which afterward, through their infirmity, they contract; 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;'* so that God may without any impeachment of his justice, cross his saints' debts, which he is paid for by their surety: it is mercy indeed to saints, but justice to Christ, that he should. O happy conjunction, where mercy and justice thus conspire to kiss each other.

* 1 John ii. 1, 2.

(2.) "God did, and well might require full and perfect obedience of man in the first covenant, because he was in a perfect state, of full power and ability to perform it, so that God looked to reap no more than he had planted. But in the gospel covenant, God doth not at first infuse into the believer full grace, but true grace, and accordingly he expects not full obedience, but sincere; he considers our frame, and every believer is (if I may so say) rated in God's books, as the stock of grace is which God gives to set up withal at first." Thus far that excellent writer. I shall add no more but this, be thou sincere and thou shalt be accepted and maintained till glory.

5. *Obj.* Yes, sayest thou, I believe God would accept me if I were but sincere, and he would not reject me, if I keep so to the end; I have no reason to doubt of God's kindness and faithfulness, but have much reason to suspect my uprightness and perseverance; God will not own nor support hypocrites.

1. *Ans.* It is not absolutely necessary to a covenant engagement, that the covenanting party know his own sincerity; uprightness, and the reflex act of knowing it, are two distinct things; sincerity in covenanting is of absolute necessity, but the sense of sincerity is not needful, though comfortable. Many a gracious soul hath prayed, heard the word, received the Lord's supper, yet hath not been satisfied of its sincerity, or acceptance with God; cordial acceptance of the terms is the condition of the covenant, not reflexive knowledge of sincerity. Do thy duty and trust God, see that thou be persuaded of this truth, that God owns upright souls, and that it is God only who makes souls sincere; address thyself to God for a sound principle, and try thyself by scripture rules, and then venture on this engagement.

2. A present heart-consent professed, is necessary to constitute the relation; but after, communion doth in time make it manifest. As it is between a husband and wife, a declaration of mutual consent constitutes the relation of man and wife, but mutual duties, and reciprocal kindnesses afterwards endear them to each other, and tend to their mutual satisfaction; thus it is here, at that very instant that thy heart and hand give free consent, God becomes thy husband, and thou, his spouse, but familiar intercourse between God and thy soul, in process of time, will more fully evidence this relation; some say, constancy in mutual duties continues the relation, however I may truly say, such free and frequent acts of communion will give thee actual possession of the comforts of this union; thou must then stay a little, and use further means in order to further evidence; "if you follow on to know the Lord,"* you shall know more of him.

6. *Obj.* Alas, saith the soul, that is the thing which greatly startles me, I have played fast and loose with God so long in reference to former engagements which I have made with him, that I am discouraged in my attempts to renew them; I am sure I have broken the covenant on my part, what ground can I have to hope that God is in covenant with me? or that I shall more faithfully keep it afterwards? I dare not venture again.

1. *Answ.* It is true, carelessness in keeping, and much more the wilful breaking of former covenants doth weaken a soul's confidence, and eclipse its comforts, and it becomes a person so circumstanced to cast himself down at God's feet, confess his sin, and seek a healing of his backslidings, but let not this circumstance deter thee from making a future engagment, for it was thy own fault, not the fault of the engagement; thou hast

* Hos. vi. 3.

no reason to challenge the duty, but condemn thyself, for thy levity in making and unfaithfulness in keeping thy covenant. Examine where the failure was, mend the matter, bind thyself more strictly, call in divine assistance, approve thy heart to God, apply thyself as solemnly to the affair as if thou hadst never engaged in it before: whether thou do it for the first time, or it be renewed, do it seriously, set about it in good earnest; frequent acts may strengthen the habit; think not that thou shalt be above all relapses while thou livest.

2. Duly consider how far backslidings may be consistent with sincerity in covenant engagements; not to make thee presumptuous in venturing upon sin, but to revive thy hopes of reception, and quicken thee to form fresh resolutions; say not there is no hope: consider, soul, many things may be matter for thy deep humiliation, which yet may not be any ground of questioning thy condition. Besides, you must distinguish between your deserts and God's determination; it is one thing what you and I merit by our carriage, and miscarriage, for God may justly cast us off; but another thing what God will do: and as it respects the issue and event, "God will not cast off his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people."* Adam by his fall deserved to die the death, but God did not execute the sentence, for covenant grace interposed, and saved him. Remember, we are under a new covenant, a covenant of grace, which admits of sincerity, and pardons failings: God deals with us according to gospel grace, not legal rigour; God heals backslidings upon repenting, and acting of faith on Jesus Christ. Besides, you must distinguish between a want of faith, and a want in faith; there will always be something lacking in your faith, yet you

* 1 Sam. xii. 22.

may not lack saving faith, a weak hand may receive this gift; less and more in point of degree change not the species of grace;* sincerity of consent makes up the relation; where that is, God will not cast off, for he hates putting away; it is not every fault in married persons dissolves the relation, (as is the observation of a great divine†) the covenant is then dissolved, when that is dissolved which did make the covenant, namely, mutual consent; the connection is continued till the soul renounce God, and choose another husband, which is spiritual adultery, that is, total and final apostacy, and continuing in impenitence and infidelity.

7. *Obj.* But still I find, by lamentable experience, that through the treachery of my base heart, I am apt to break my engagement; is it not better to forbear entering into a covenant than to violate it, and so to increase my guilt? Solomon saith, "better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."‡

1. *Answ.* As for that text it concerns not the business in hand, for it speaks of vows in cases indifferent, and wherein we are at liberty whether we vow or not, and in matters within our power to perform. As in the case of Ananias and Sapphira selling their possession which was in their power or choice; it was not a duty antecedent to their vow, for it had been no sin in them not to have sold it, their sin was in lying to the Holy Ghost.|| But now this covenanting to which I am urging you, is an absolute and indispensable duty, and not left as a thing indifferent that you may do or refuse, without sin; what things I have laid before you are morally and eternally good, which you cannot omit without guilt; nay, let me say farther, you are already engaged by covenant, if you have been baptized, and

* 1 Thess. iii. 10. Magis et minus non variant speciem.

† Dr. Preston on New Coven. p. 458. ‡ Eccl. v. 5. || Acts v. 4.

your neglect of the fundamental duties of taking God for your God, and dedicating yourselves to him, is not only sin but sacrilege, not only iniquity but apostacy, which God will punish as if you had in this personal manner engaged and then violated your engagement. Covenanting is essential to christianity, wouldest thou not be a Christian? But I guess the reason of thy unwillingness to enter into this personal covenant, there lies a snake under the grass, a soul-ruining deceit under this specious plea; the true cause is not because thou art afraid of breaking, but averse to keep this covenant, and therefore art loth to make it; hereby thou thinkest to slip the collar, and the devil and a wicked heart would persuade thee that thou dost not sin, or at least sin less, if thou be not solemnly engaged, though thou allow thyself liberty in omitting aforesaid duties. But let me tell thee,

(1.) That it is not thy self-engagement, but God's commandment that makes it thy duty; duty is an obligation to do something required.

(2.) Thou must be condemned as well for thy wilful refusal of a covenant engagement, as careless observance or wilful violation of it; therefore this shift will not help thee.

2. Take one thing further, thou art afraid of entering into covenant lest thou break it; I answer, if thy heart be sincerely engaged in covenant with God, God becomes thy covenant God, and so thy faithful friend, to assist thee in performing it; this is of great consequence, for after this covenant is really made, God saith to thee, in some sense, as Jehoshaphat to Ahab when making a league, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and I will be with thee in the war;"* thus covenant relation brings supplies of covenant grace, as divine auxiliaries to the believer; God

* 2 Chron. xviii. 3.

will help thy soul in keeping this covenant, for observe in this new covenant, God not only engageth to perform his part, but also that of believers, both the first conditions, "as taking away a heart of stone, giving a heart of flesh, giving a new heart, putting his spirit in them, &c;"* and also after assistance to perform covenant duties, enabling them to persevere to the end. "I will," saith God, "put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. Remember, Christian, thou art now to serve God in the covenant of grace, which produces what it promises, as it calls thee to work so it gives thee strength to work; it deals not with souls as Pharaoh with Israel, calling on them to make brick and finding no straw, or as the old covenant did, that required duty, but helped not to ability; no, the Christian hath both straw and strength, a heart and hand for God, "I will, (saith he) strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in my name, saith the Lord."† Do but enter into covenant with God, and thou shalt feel divine strength coming into thy heart; the way of the Lord is strength to the upright, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; in the margin, shall change their strength, that is, covenant grace will bring a new kind of spiritual strength adapted for spiritual work.‡ Received grace makes a saint more than a man, assisting grace makes him more than himself, "I can," saith Paul, "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;"‖ fear not impossibilities to nature when omnipotence upholds you; try and see that nothing is insuperable to a willing mind; the matter is of necessity, be not discouraged with difficulties.

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. † Zech. x. 12.
‡ Prov. x. 29. Isa. xl. 31. ‖ Phil. iv. 13.

CHAP. XI.

THE DUTIES REQUIRED OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY FORMING A COVENANT ENGAGEMENT WITH GOD.

VII. THE last head I proposed to insist upon in the doctrinal prosecution of this subject is, how a Christian must behave himself after he hath been thus solemnly making a personal vow or covenant with the Lord?

The answer to this inquiry, I shall comprise under these ten particulars:—

1. Prayer to God for a ratification of it, and grace to keep it; down on thy knees again, in the place where thou hast been making this important engagement, and since none is privy to this great affair but God and thine own conscience, say to him after this manner: Lord, thou, even thou, only knowest the hearts of all the children of men,* I appeal to thee alone concerning my sincerity in this present undertaking, my heart is deceitful and may easily impose upon me, but thou searchest the heart, shew me the interior of my soul.† Lord, if my aims and proceedings have been corrupt and hypocritical, humble and reform me, pardon failings; I hope my scope for the main, was thy glory, and my enjoyment of thy favour, and in order to both, the binding of this treacherous heart more closely to thee; if thou see any flaw or fault, any guile or criminal defect in my spirit, Lord, discover, and cure it; if there be any gospel sincerity, regard it, accept me in Christ, and confirm that in heaven, which I have been now doing on earth; what I have done was in pursuance of thy order and com-

* 1 Kings viii. 39. † Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

mission, and from a conviction of my duty, and I have many promises in thy word to encourage me. Be my covenant God, take me as thy covenant servant; do thou set to thy seal, say to my soul, I am thy salvation, as my soul hath said to thee, thou art my Lord, let the God of my salvation be exalted; I have now set to my seal, that God is true, come, Lord, and seal me with the Holy Spirit of promise, and give me the earnest of that Spirit in my heart, from this day do thou bless me, let God, even mine own God, bless me, for this God, shall be my God, for ever and ever, he will be my guide even unto death.* O my Lord, give me a heart to keep this covenant, let my God command strength; strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for me; without thee I can do nothing, all my springs are in thee;† if the Lord depart from me, I shall be weak as other men; thou hast helped me to make, now help me to keep my covenant; let not these convictions or impressions languish or die in my soul, leave me not to myself; be surety for thy servant for good, I am thy servant give me understanding; remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,‡ thou knowest Lord, how backward my heart was to enter these bonds, how many pleas, excuses, and evasions I made to shuffle and shift it off, and now I am bound, thou knowest what a backsliding heart I have. "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy servant, and prepare and stablish my heart for thee.‖

2. Be thankful to God for this season and duty, it

* Psal. xxxv. 3. xvi. 2. xviii. 46. John iii. 33. Eph i. 13, 14. 2 Cor. i. 22. Psalm lxvii. 6. xlviii. 14.

† Psal. lxviii. 28. John xv. 5. Psal. lxxxvii. 7.

‡ Psal. cxix. 122, 125, 49. ‖ 1 Chron. xxix. 18.

is a rich mercy that God hath condescended to enter into a new covenant with the children of men; it is free grace that gives you a heart to devote yourselves to the Lord, and that gives you any hopes of reception; adore him for it, and let your spirits be elevated with raptures of joy and gratitude. "Lord, what is man that thou art thus mindful of him?"* what is fallen man that thou dost visit him, treat with him, and provide a Saviour and surety for him; thou forsookest the fallen angels, once the sons of God, the darlings of heaven, and courtiers of the King of kings, now lost fiends, cursed devils, reserved in chains of darkness, never to be brought into the bond of a covenant. O that ever the infinite God should cast down beams of light, life, and love upon wretched man! yea upon me, hast thou glanced with a propitious aspect, thou hast let me see, I am a forlorn sinner, awakened my attention to look after a Saviour, melted my heart with a sense of divine love, engaged my soul to lay hold on Christ by faith, and devote myself to thee in covenant, and given me some hopes through grace that thou art my God. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?—is this the manner of man, O Lord God? and what can thy servant say more unto thee? for thou, Lord, knowest thy servant."† For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. O that ever free grace, should pitch on such a wretched worm, such a vile rebel, such a devil incarnate as I am! O that thou shouldest take up an exposed orphan, whom no eye pitied, but was cast out in the open field, polluted in my blood, and shouldest say, Live, yea again, live,‡ and made this a time of love, and didst enter into

* Psal. viii. iv. † 2 Sam. vii. 18—20. ‡ Ezek. xvi. 4—8.

covenant with me, and I became thine. O that ever God should stoop so low, and raise me so high! what did God see in me? what use can I be of more than thousands passed by? "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour, who hath regarded the low estate of his servant, and hath exalted me, though of low degree."* But will God indeed dwell on earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; and wilt thou inhabit so mean a cottage?† yea, thou thyself informest me, that though thou be the high and lofty One, who dwellest in the high and holy place, yet thou takest up thy abode with him also, who is of a contrite and humble spirit.‡ Blessed be God, for this holy ligature, covenant grace hath laid a foundation for this delightful union and relation; this union and relation produce communion and communications. Blessed be free grace; the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein, he hath sent redemption to his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever, holy and reverend is his name.‖

3. Gather and improve the blessings of the covenant; make a catalogue of the promises. It is the fault of Christians, that they study not the large inventory of those precious goods bequeathed to them in this blessed testament; that is an extensive expression, *all is yours*, good things and bad things, north and south winds blow good to you, to do you good, to make the spices of your graces to flow out, and to kill the weeds of corruption.§ Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are yours, is not this an exceeding great reward?¶ Who can fathom the extent of that covenant phrase, *I will be thy God?* it comprehends more than heaven and

* Luke i. 46, 47, 52. † 1 Kings viii. 27. ‡ Isa. lvii. 15
‖ Psal. cxi. 2, 9. § 1 Cor. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28. Cant. iv. 16.
¶ Gen xv. 1.

earth ; here are life, grace, pardon, peace, safety, liberty, strength and heaven ; God is heaven, in his light we shall see light ; what good thing can you name, which this covenant doth not contain, and convey to you ? " O the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage ;" what is it ? " The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup, thou maintainest my lot." Creatures are empty cisterns, " God is the fountain of living waters ;"* if all the stars should shine at once they cannot make day, but the sun doth, the lines of all created natures may centre in God, and find suitable and sufficient rest. O my soul, delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart, yea thou hast thy heart's desire in him, all excellencies meet in him ; I need to go no further for contentment, I need not with the wandering bee go to another flower, I find enough in God ; " Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want ;" whenever I am afraid or afflicted I will go to God, trust in God, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, till these calamities be overpast ; my Lord is a sun in times of darkness, a shield in times of danger,† a magazine whence I may fetch armour, a wardrobe whence I may have cloathing, a storehouse whence I shall have supplies ; blessed be God for his covenant ; " Although my house and heart be not so with God as I desire, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."‡ In prosperity I will solace myself in nothing but my God, I will be put off with nothing below him ;|| in adversity, when all looks black around me, and a peal of stones flies about my head, yet still

* Psal. xvi. 5, 6. Jer. ii. 13.
† Psal. xxiii. 1. xxxvi. 7. lvii. 1. lxxxiv. 11.
‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. || 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

I will encourage myself in the Lord my God. O what a transporting object to see my God, and my Lord Jesus standing at his right hand!* If I be cast into a fiery furnace, the presence of the Son of God will quench the flames; in the bottom of the sea, and in the belly of hell, the Lord my God will save me and bring my life from corruption: "let sun and moon be darkened, and stars withdraw their shining; yea, when God roars out of Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, then the Lord is the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."† I will bless myself in the God of truth, living it shall be my support that I am within the covenant, and when I die, like a standard-bearer falling, I will wrap this banner of the covenant about me and die in it as my winding sheet, as dying David with this living comfort, without fear of miscarriage.

4. Lay up the experience of what hath now passed between God and your souls; write down the passages and circumstances of this solemnity, and lay them up amongst your choicest treasures; thus and thus did God deal with me at such a time, thus and thus did I devote myself to the Lord; I will record this and deposit it, it may stand me in stead in time to come; this day will I set up an Ebenezer, that is, a stone of help, for a memorial of God's goodness, and my engagement, and this shall be as a witness either for me, or against me; it will be my consolation in the hour and power of darkness, if my soul prove faithful; but if my soul prove false or treacherous in the covenant of my God, it will be a testimony against me for my conviction or humiliation. I will think of this time or place whilst I have a day to live, and will say, "surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not; how dreadful is this

* Acts vii. 56. † Dan. iii. 25. Jonah ii. 4, 6, 9. Joel iii. 13—16.

place, this is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven, I will call it Bethel; here will I erect an altar, and will call it El-Elohe-Israel." * In this place, at this time I have taken hold of God as my God, and I have made a deed of gift, and subscribed to it; I have given seisin and delivery of all I am and have to the Lord, I am resolved to adhere to this engagement. Lord, remember this day, help me to remember, that from this day the vows of God are upon me, I will produce these covenant tokens in the day of my fears or of God's anger; as familiar as God and my soul are now, a time of distance may come through my fault and folly; alas, my depraved heart, which is bent to backsliding, may again hurry me into a pit of darkness, these vapours that ascend from my polluted heart may darken the sun of God's blessed countenance; though now I think my mountain stands so strong that I shall never be moved, yet God may hide his face and I may be troubled; though now his candle shine upon my head, that candle may be extinct, and I may walk in darkness;† indeed "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant;" but presently the same David saith, "I am desolate and afflicted, the troubles of my heart are enlarged." Thus it may be with me, covenant scourges may be consistent with covenant love; but I will then bring forth the tokens of this virgin love, and solemn transaction, and will say, Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth;‡ when I am troubled I will call for the book of the records of scripture and conscience, and consider the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High,‖ and see if I cannot pro-

* Gen. xxviii. 16—18. xxxiii. 20. † Psalm xxx. 7. Job xxix. 3, 4.
‡ Ps. xxv. 14, 17. lxxxix. 32, 39, 49. ‖ Est. vi. 1. Ps. lxxvii. 10—12.

duce some broken ring, some passages of love between God and my soul, that may evidence former kindness, then I will conclude for his present faithfulness; for having loved his own in the world, he loves them unto the end, and he is faithful who called me, who also will do it;* when I am brought forth, and sentenced as Tamar was once, to be burnt, I will produce the pledges of former intercourse between God and my soul, and say, Discern I pray thee, whose are these? Lord, was not thy grace the cause of these transactions? and was not thy glory the end of all my proceedings?

5. Take the first opportunity to get this covenant openly sealed, and to give some testimony of your ratifying it. When these sacred indentures are drawn and sealed by you in private, then lay hold of the first opportunity which presents itself, for sealing them solemnly at the Lord's supper: privy seals have passed reciprocally between God and thy soul, now look out for the broad seal: David recounts his personal actings of faith in private though with hard strugglings, Psal. cxvi. 10, 11, and then resolves to "take the cup of salvation," ver. 13, "and to pay his vows," ver. 14. But where? Why, "in the presence of all his people," which he repeats and adds also, "in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem," ver. 18, 19, as if he had said, what I have been doing privately in my closet, I will own publicly in the congregation of his saints: I am not ashamed of my engagement, before many witnesses will I confirm this covenant, "with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."† Augustin speaks of Victorinus, a famous rhetorician at Rome, that being converted to Christ in old age, he

* John xiii. 1. 1 Thess. v. 24. † Rom. x. 10.

came to Simplicianus, a godly minister, saying secretly in his ears, dost thou know that I am a Christian?* this holy man answered, I do not believe it, nor reckon thee among Christians till I see thee in the church of Christ;† at which he smiled, saying, do those walls then make a Christian?‡ Thus they contended, the one saying he was a Christian, the other disowning him to be so without an open profession, for indeed Victorinus was afraid to offend his great friends, worshippers of devils, being yet but a young convert; when he had got establishment by reading, that if he was ashamed of Christ, our Lord would be ashamed of him before his angels, he was sensible of his guilt, in being ashamed of that which was his greatest glory, the word and sacraments, but had gloried in diabolical sacrifices;‖ suddenly and unexpectedly he comes to Simplicianus, saying,§ let us now go to church, for I am resolved to be a Christian; and there he was initiated in the sacred ordinances of the church, gave up his name to Christ, Rome wondering, the church rejoicing, the proud saw it and were angry, and being to make a solemn profession of faith, the Presbyters offered to indulge him with secrecy, as they used to do with the timorous; he refused, saying, there was no salvation in rhetoric, which he had taught publicly, now, therefore, he would publicly own the gospel of salvation; and when he made profession of his faith, the people echoed with a congratulating acclamation, Victorinus, Victorinus! and were quickly silent, that they might hear him pronounce the true faith with holy confidence; they open-

* Aug. Confes. lib. 8. c. 2. Noveris me jam esse Christianum?

† Non credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos nisi in Ecclesia Christi te videro. ‡ Ergone parietes faciunt Christianum?

‖ Depuduit vanitati, erubuit veritati.

§ Eamus in Ecclesiam, Christianus volo fieri.

ed their hearts to receive him, they embraced and laid hold on him with the hands of love and joy: this story is pregnant with many important instructions, which the intelligent may improve. You must openly own what you have secretly done, upon a due call; only observe, confession of the mouth without faith in the heart is hypocrisy, and a pretence of faith in the heart without confession, will prove cowardice, and end in apostacy. My advice is, that you wait on God in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper, which presents the cup of the new testament in his blood; thy covenant transaction formed thy union, let this be the communion of the body and blood of Christ: when Hezekiah had made a covenant with the God of Israel, he ordered the celebration of the passover; the like did Josiah; and those were both non-such passovers: thus must you get this covenant sealed, and pay your vows, and bring presents to your covenant God, yea, defer not to pay your vows, while your hearts are warm and graciously inflamed, this will be a demonstration of integrity;* thus Asa performed an act of great self-denial immediately after his covenanting, 2 Chron. xv. 12, 16, the work will go forward best now when thy spirit is raised by the solemnity of the affair; but if Jacob forget to make good his vow presently, he will quite forget it till God roundly put him in mind of it.†

6. Answer all temptations with pleas brought from this covenant engagement. This is your panoply, fetch your weapons from hence against the devil: when Satan, the world, or the flesh shall solicit you to sin, you may put in this caveat, of a precedent right, and antecedent title that another hath to you: I am not my own

* Matt. xxvi. 28. 1 Cor. x. 16. 2 Chron. xxix. 10. xxx. 21. xxxiv. 31, 32. xxxv. 1, 18. Psal. lxxvi. 11. Eccl. v. 4.

† Gen. xxxv. 1, 2.

to bestow, nor is any thing that I have; I have given over my soul and body to the rightful owner, you come too late now to woo me for mine affections, I have made my choice, and am married to another; and what have I to do with any but my dearest Lord and husband? I cannot serve two masters;* my Maker is my husband, I see no cause to repent or revoke my choice; whither else should I go? "he hath the words of eternal life;" as Saul said, "can the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards, and make you captains?"† So I may say, can the world give me grace, or pardon, or heaven? What can the creature do for me to recompense the loss of God's presence by gratifying a lust? Shall I leave my fatness, received from the true olive, to be promoted over the trees?‡ Should I forego my sweetness and good fruit? Shall I forsake the true vine Jesus Christ, for being promoted over, or profited by the revenues or fruits of these poor trees in this inferior world? God forbid; all the treasures, pleasures, and preferments on this sorry dunghill, will not compensate the loss of communion with God one hour; there is satisfaction enough in God, I need not seek to eke out my comfort elsewhere; having drunk this old wine of divine grace, I desire not new, for I am sure the old is better; "better are the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim, than the vintage of Abiezer,"‖ the worst of Christ is better than the best of the world; "I would rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."§ Get thee hence Satan, though thou offer me the whole world, and wert able to perform thy promise, I scorn the proposal, thou bidst me lose, I have made a better engagement, I can-

* Matt. vi. 24.
† John vi. 68. 1 Sam. xxii. 7.
‡ Judg. ix. 8—13
‖ Luke v. 39. Judg. viii. 2.
§ Heb. xi. 25.

not, I will not reverse it; I have given myself to another, and am not at mine own disposal; I am another's servant, and if my master will not give me leave, I cannot comply with thy offer; I am bound and must obey, I will be at the command of my dear Lord and master: "What have I to do any more with idols? Shall I sin because grace abounds?"* God forbid. None but a devil would make such an illogical inference. Shall I defile and alienate the temple of God, which is consecrated to a holy use?† Shall I fill the holy vessels with vile refuse? far be it from me. And as the devil shall not draw me away to sin, so he shall not drive me to despair and despondency; I will hold up this buckler and shield against the fiery darts of Satan; when the foul fiend of hell tempts me to doubt of the love of God, or question the truth of grace in my heart, I will appeal to my dear Lord—thou, O my Lord, knowest the time, and room, when and where I made a covenant engagement with thee, and what then passed; thou knowest I took thee to be my God, and gave up myself to thee; I hope I shall never forget the earnestness, the self-abasing confessions, the voluntary subscriptions to thy terms, in the most humble postures of soul and body, and with what kindness thou didst embrace my poor perplexed soul; let the devil say what he will, God is my God, I am his servant, I have sworn myself to him, and though I have sinned against him, I hope I have not deserted him, and trust he will not cast me off for ever; away then fiend of hell, thou shalt never argue me out of my faith and reason, or out of spiritual sense and experience, though my sins be great, God's mercy is greater, though my backslidings are many, it is a covenant of grace, Christ's merits

* Hos. xiv. 8. Rom. vi. 1. † 1 Cor. iii. 16.

are infinite, his love is free, I will adhere to the promise, thou shalt never beat me out of this my strong hold.

7. Espouse God's interest as your own. You are now in covenant with him, therefore act as confederates, let God's cause be yours, as he concerns himself for you: when God's interest is low, you must exercise your sympathy, pray for the peace of Jerusalem, lament Zion's ruins, and favour the dust thereof.* Uriah was a sworn soldier, a faithful member of the army of Israel, and he would attach himself to it, not to court or city, or family delights. "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields, shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink, and lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing:"† how can you be at rest when God's concerns are low? When one member suffers should not all the members suffer with it?‡ When one string of a lute is struck, do not the rest vibrate? Can you be content to sit as persons unconcerned, in your houses of cedar, when the ark of God dwelleth within curtains? Is it time for you, O ye to dwell in your ceiled houses, when God's house lies waste?‖ Oh that Christians could be of a public spirit, surely you should prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy: Are you not members of Christ's mystical body?§ and are you not ashamed to seek your own things and not the things of Jesus Christ? It becomes you to be like minded with God and his saints, that you may naturally care for the church's state, associate affectionately with afflicted souls, grieve for God's dishonour, and use your utmost endeavours for propagating religion:

* Psal. cxxii. 6. † 2 Sam. xi. 11. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 26.
‖ 2 Sam. vii. 1. Hag. i. 4. § Phil. ii. 20, 21.

O methinks it is good for me thus to draw near to God!* O the sweetness of these bonds! would to God my dearest relations, nearest neighbours, yea, bitterest enemies were thus devoted to God: come all that fear God and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul;† thus saith holy David, after his vowing and paying his vows. It is true, you must not cast these precious pearls before swine, you must be cautious where, when, how, to whom, for what end you declare your experience; carnal hearts may scorn you, but wisdom is profitable to direct, that you may encourage and counsel well meaning souls. So doth Christ's spouse commend her beloved, and recommend practical duties to the daughters of Jerusalem;‡ that is, young beginners who inquire of what description her beloved was, and where they should find him, yea, in the spouse's instruction of them, she instanceth in this very way of finding and retaining her best beloved, namely, by personal covenant, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lillies," there you may find him, thus you may be entitled to his favour: thus tell your children, servants, neighbours, how blessed a thing it is to have a covenant title to God, Christ, and spiritual riches, take them by the hand, and lead them to him; get as many soldiers enlisted under the banner of your King and Captain as you can; use your utmost endeavours, as well as plead in prayer, that God's name may be glorified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done: promote these glorious ends to the utmost of your capacity, by your pains, prayers, doing, enduring, yea, dying, if God calls you to it; that you may glorify God in life and death, and that living and dying you may be the Lord's.

* Psal. lxxiii. 28. † Psal. lxvi. 13—16.
‡ Song v. 10. vi. 1—3.

8. Make conscience of being stedfast and acting conformably to your covenant; this is your great duty. Study fidelity to God, as you expect that God should be faithful to you; "Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God,"* either by a total or final apostacy: "Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;"† hold the beginning of your confidence stedfast to the end, so shall you evidence indeed, that you are partakers of Christ;‡ you find a vast difference between those mentioned Psal. xliv. 17, 18, and those in Psal. lxxviii. 8—10: "All this," say the former, "is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant," happy souls, that can truly say so; but the latter, that is, the children of Ephraim, set not their heart aright, and their spirit was not stedfast with God; therefore though they were armed, and carried bows, yet they turned back in the day of battle; why so? they kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his laws; alas, their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant, ver. 37, this loosened the joints of their armour, this struck the bow out of their hands. Apostacy disunites persons from God; they that are close to God in covenant, are as a girdle cleaving to the loins of a man, but if they decay and withdraw from God, they are as a rotten girdle, good for nothing, then God will mar the pride of such backsliders;‖ observe it, they that are not upright in making, will never be stedfast in keeping their covenant engagement. O Christians, you that have entered these sacred bonds, be sincere, and serious in all manner of intercourse and conversation; remember always the vows of God are upon you, do all as in God's sight

* Heb. iii. 12. † 1 Cor. xv. 58. ‡ Heb. iii, 14. ‖ Jer. xiii. 7—11.

and fear, in natural, civil, and spiritual actions, live as persons devoted to God, pray, read, meditate, watch your hearts, lips, and senses, and maintain a spiritual warfare; be heavenly-minded, pure in body and spirit, and exact in all you do, for you are under obligations: not only God's law, but your own voluntary promise hath brought you within these lists and limits; swerve not a hair's breadth, but keep fast to God, against all opposition or allurements. You are no better for making, unless you make conscience of keeping your covenants; the Lord is with you while you be with him, so saith Azariah to Asa,* so saith dying David to surviving Solomon, but he adds, "if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever;"† if you walk in integrity of heart before him, the Lord will establish his covenant with you.‡ Cæsar plunged into the sea, and swimming towards land, let go his imperial robe, but kept fast hold of his books; even so must you part with all rather than part with God, his word, or covenant mercies, these are your treasure, this is the blessed charter of your heavenly inheritance; if you forsake and forego this, you are undone for ever. But more of this hereafter.

9. Frequently re-consider and sometimes renew this your covenant. Some of God's children have found great advantage by this course of looking over their covenant engagements long since made. It was at such time, saith one, when I entered into covenant with the Lord, how have I conducted myself since? have I walked more closely with God? have I mortified corruption more successfully? have I been more watchful against the occasions and appearances of sin? have I exercised grace more vigorously, and found my spiritual strength increasing? have I performed duties

* 2 Chron. xv. 2. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. ‡ 1 Kings ix. 3—5.

more constantly, seriously, and profitably than formerly? If conscience do witness for God and thy soul, give him glory, take the comfort, thou mayest have thy two hundred, so that thou givest Solomon his thousand when thou hast carefully kept the fruit of his vineyard;* but if conscience testify to thy face that thou hast been unfaithful, lie down in thy shame, and let confusion cover thee;† confess thy sins, beg mercy and pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ; thy sins are aggravated from thy very covenant engagement, they are now become sacrilege. Read over the articles thou didst subscribe, go from branch to branch, and then look over thy conscience and conversation, be distinct in the survey, hurry it not over cursorily, but consider it punctually; in this I failed and fell short, in that I went too far, in thought, word, or deed, drop over every fault a tear, not to make God amends, but to testify the grief of your souls for your sins, and under the sense of your criminal deficiency when enjoying so glorious a privilege; as you were unworthy of it, so your unworthy behaviour might justly have provoked God to have cast you off utterly; cry out, O wretch, that I am, who have sinned against such kindness from God, and my own strongest engagements to better obedience. O Lord, though mine iniquities testify against me, do thou accept of me for thy name's sake; for my backslidings are many, I have sinned against thee.‡ Lord, take away all iniquity, receive me graciously, so will I render to thee the calves of my lips;‖ and now also renew your covenant with God; it must be renewed several times in the course of your life, as I have hinted before, especially after heinous sins, or dangerous decays, now form a fresh obligation, let there be another, yea a stricter bond,

* Song. viii. 12. † Jer. iii. 25. ‡ Jer. xiv. 7. ‖ Hos. xiv. 2.

and this new link added to the old chain, this new knot in the decaying cord, may add some strength to it; men are usually more ashamed to break their word which has newly gone out of their mouth, than old promises, which are pretended to be forgotten; old and obsolete things men look on as out of date, but repetition adds new vigour to them. Solemnity of performance leaves some sense upon the conscience; it may do well to set a new stamp on the frequently handled and worn out wax; yea, in some cases you must fall to work, as if you never had done any thing, and also use more seriousness on the painful recollection of your wilful violations; and O for more care, fear, jealousy, watchfulness than ever! See now that you depend more on God's strength, less on yourselves, derive virtue from Christ, by actings of faith upon him; lie under the sense of your disability and God's all-sufficiency, hope and pray for a better frame of heart; it is in the promise, why may it not be realized in actual existence? Observe the first occasions of your first defection, make fresh and solemn resolutions against them, construct the strongest fence where the hedge is lowest, arm yourselves most carefully against your own transgressions, yet not slighting others, pray and watch against all, say: Lord, I thought I found my heart determined to accept of thee, as my God, and to give up myself entirely to thee, but I have found my heart very treacherous, I little thought I should have proved so feeble and fickle, so false and perfidious, so failing and short-coming in the performance of duty, and no wonder I feel myself greatly discouraged, I begin to question whether I do well or not to enter into such an engagement, I doubt my sincerity, and what shall I do? turn my back on thee I cannot, must not, dare not; engage myself again I dare not, for I have no rea-

son to trust this deceitful heart, yet in thy name and strength I must and will venture; but God forbid, I should now mock the Almighty, and bring more guilt on my own soul, by making a new engagement, and afterwards being guilty of a new failure. Lord, prevent me by thy grace, assist me by thy Spirit, thou art able to make me stand, though weak, let thy strength be perfected in my weakness; O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me; unite my heart to thee.*

10. Prepare for the completion of this engagement in the mansions above; that will be a blessed consummation of this new covenant relation. You may be confident that he that hath begun this good work in you, will perform it till the day of Christ;† this is your betrothing to him, that day there will be a solemnization of the marriage. "I have espoused you," saith the apostle, "to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;"‡ let the bride then make herself ready, let your loins be girt about, and your lights burning, and yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord; being by this gospel covenant grafted into Christ the olive tree, the Christian comes to have oil in his vessel; O therefore get thy lamp trimmed, and then go forth to meet the bridegroom, that thou mayest go into the bridegroom's chamber.‖ Bless God for this engagement, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,§ pray in hope, walk and war in hope, serve God, and converse with men in hope of this blessed day. You that are heirs of God, and have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within yourselves, waiting for the redemption of your body;¶ O wait and

* Rom. xiv. 4. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Isa. xxxviii. 14. Psal. lxxxvi. 11.
† Phil. i. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 2.
‖ Rev. xix. 7. Luke xii. 35, 36. Rom. xi. 17. Matt. xxv. 4, 10.
§ Rom. v. 2. ¶ Rom. viii. 17—23.

long for the approach of your dearest husband, sigh and say, make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.* O Lord, my soul desired a union to thee, therefore I covenanted to be thine in a near relation, now my soul pants after present communion with thee in the glass and channels of ordinances, and O for one lift higher in immediate fruition. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;"† remember the prayer of my blessed Lord, that they whom thou hast given him, and in consequence have given themselves to him, may be with him where he is, to behold and enjoy his glory;‡ and shall I be with thee, dear Lord? that is the height of my ambition, that is the utmost of my desire and hope; thou hast shewed me this path of life, crown me with glory and immortality, "for in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.|| O but I want much fitness for that blessed state, Lord, make my soul meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light;§ work me up to this self same thing, fill my soul with the fruits of righteousness; let grace rise up apace till it ascend to glory, let this hidden grace in the shell grow too big for this lower sphere of existence; that when Christ who is my life doth appear, I may appear with him in glory.¶ O that this morning light, this feeble dawning, may shine more and more unto the perfect day.** Thou, Lord, hast planted me in the house of the Lord, make me to flourish as the palm-tree, or to grow like a cedar in Lebanon, even to bring forth fruit in old age, and let that fruit be to eternal life;†† this is the end of my spiritual marriage, that I may bring forth fruit unto

* Song. viii. 14. † Gen. xlix. 18. ‡ John xvii. 24.
|| Psal. xvi. 11. § Col. i. 12. ¶ Col. iii. 3, 4,
** Prov. iv. 18. †† Psal. xcii. 12—15.

God.* Lord, make me fruitful in holiness, useful to all about me, resembling my great Lord and master, that at last my soul may be received to the bosom of Abraham; in the mean time my dear Lord is in covenant with me, and will pave my way to heaven, "thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.† Lord, I put my hand into thy hand, thou art my God, lead me in thy truth, bring me to thy holy hill, leave me not to the rage of mine enemies to stop me in the way, but waft me safe over the Jordan of death; "When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me;‡ the blessed covenant is my passport to carry me through death, and through death to give my body repose in the grave, it will also unite my soul more closely to my Lord, and therefore I will make that bold challenge, and sing that triumphant song, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."‖

Thus much for what I proposed to discuss in the more doctrinal part of this subject, though it being so practical, I shall have less need to enlarge in the application.

* Rom. vii. 4. † Psal. lxxiii. 24. ‡ Psal. xxiii. 4.
‖ 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

CHAP. XII.

ADDRESS TO PERSONS OF DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS COMMENCING WITH UNCONVERTED SINNERS.

I HAVE now despatched the main business that I proposed in this discourse, for explication and confirmation, and have given many directions for personally accomplishing a regular covenant transaction, and also rules for the guidance of the Christian afterwards: I shall now proceed briefly to make application of all this to the consciences of men.

Now there are but two classes of people in the world, namely, *unconverted sinners*, and *pious persons* who have been renewed by divine grace.

To the former I shall briefly address myself by way of challenge, for the purpose of conviction, and then give counsel, or attempt persuasion.

First, Here is ground of severe challenge and accusation to poor careless sinners; and here I am very sensible the most important thing is yet behind, namely, to convince such persons that as yet they are out of covenant, and then make a trial if at last I may prevail with them solemnly to enter into it. I confess I am heartless in the undertaking, most will not take the pains to read thus far, others will throw it by as a needless formality. All sinners have stubborn wills, and the most learned, pious, zealous preachers, have found by sad experience that the most rational, convincing discourses preached or printed have been frustrated by an obstinate, unruly will, or wilfulness; Christ himself hath left this upon record, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life."* O what a wicked, perverse creature is man!

* John v. 40.

That I may more effectually succeed in my purpose, I shall in a few particulars introduce the several descriptions of sinners who come under the lash of reproof as to this great concern.

1. Some absolutely and resolutely refuse to enter into any covenant engagement with God, and have no heart to take the terms thereof into consideration: of this sort were those that being invited to the marriage feast made light of it,* they would not take it into their thoughts, but went away; they did not think it worth consideration, but turned their backs on it, and put it quite out of their minds, just as Esau did with his birth-right, when he had got his belly full of bread and pottage of lentiles; the text saith, "he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way,"† thus Esau despised his birth-right: just so do many now-a-days, let them but have the husks of worldly delights, they dismiss thoughts of God; most men have neither time nor inclination to consider whether heaven or hell be better, whether it be safer to have the eternal God to be their friend or enemy, whether the enjoyment of God or separation from him be more eligible, or fitter to be chosen: no, this is the farthest from their thoughts. Poor sinner, canst thou find time for worldly business, and insignificant trifles? Thou art never weary of collecting toys, but canst thou get no time day or night to ruminate on God, Christ, pardon, or heaven? What hast thou thy rational soul for? Is eternity nothing in thy account? Shall gospel commodities be always accounted refuse-wares, so that thou wilt not so much as turn aside to ask of what use they are? what are they good for? or what rate are they at? Base ingratitude! when God in the ministry of the word presents gospel commodities with greatest advantage, and tells you,

* Matt. xxii. 5. † Gen. xxv. 34.

you shall have them freely without money or price, will you still turn a deaf ear? will you still scorn the offer, and imagine that the thoughts of heaven will make you melancholy? must God complain of you as of his ancient people, "my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me?"* May not such a complaint from the eternal God break a heart of adamant? it is as if God should say, I have made them the fairest offers that ever were presented to a rational creature, I treated them as friends, gave them glorious deliverances, and precious ordinances, I answered their prayers, and bade them still farther open their mouths wide and I would fill them, yet nothing would prevail, they would none of me; I urged my suit with fresh arguments, and sighed out my cordial wish, Oh that my people would have hearkened unto me! I would have done so and so for them; did ever suitor woo more pathetically; yet all this will not do, Israel would none of me; well, let them go and seek a better husband.† I have spoken and done fair in the judgment of impartial arbitrators; nay, I dare apeal to themselves, what could have been done more to them:‡ well, it seems I must not be heard, I have given them up to their heart's lust, and they walk in their own counsels, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be, there is no remedy, since they refuse the remedy which I have prescribed, "they have chosen their own ways—I also will choose their delusions;" let them now go their own length, and be snared in the work of their own hands.‖

2. Some virtually and practically refuse to enter into covenant with God; this is done by choosing sin, and the world, or what is inconsistent with new cove-

* Psal. lxxxi. 11. † ver. 13—16. ‡ Isa. v. 4.
‖ Deut. xxxii. 20. Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. Prov. v. 22.

nant terms; the dominion of sin, and sincerity of heart cannot exist together. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"* Love to sin gives sin a law over the soul, he that committeth sin is the servant of sin;† the word imports heart-love, and a customary following of iniquity: some sinners even make a covenant with death, and are at agreement with hell, that is, in some sort, with the devil, for they make lies their refuge, and under falsehood do hide themselves.‡ You will say, are any in covenant with the devil but witches? I answer, it may not be explicitly, but implicitly and by consequence there are. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft;‖ a stubborn sinner holds compact with the devil; they that are led captive by Satan at his pleasure, hold voluntary correspondence with the prince of darkness, they dance within his snare, and are not willing to recover or awake themselves, or be awaked, since they are in a pleasing dream of sensual pleasure;§ this is the case of poor sinners, and whose should they be but the devil's, that are not the Lord's? saith an ancient writer:¶ such as give not up themselves to God, do sell themselves to sin. Ah sinner, dost thou choose to be of the serpent's seed, rather than God's child? wilt thou be the dragon's soldier, rather than one of Michael's?** dost thou choose to be actuated by the infernal fiend, rather than animated by the sacred Spirit? Oh dreadful! that sinners like the centurion's servants, should be at the devil's beck! whenever your master puts you on, you will swear, lie, curse, steal, be drunk, covetous, unclean; if the devil say, flee

* Psal xciv. 20. † John viii. 34.
‡ Isa. xxviii. 15. ‖ 1 Sam. xv. 23. § 2 Tim. ii. 26.
¶ Alterius esse non possunt nisi diaboli qui Dei non sunt.—*Tertul. de Idolat.* ** Rev. xii. 7.

from sound reproofs, escape from the checks of an accusing conscience, get out of the company of these precisians, you presently comply. Satan tempts, the sinner consents, and the bargain is made; the master requires work, the sinner expects wages, this is the compact; yielding ourselves denotes in one scripture both the engagement of a sinner, and a sincere Christian, Rom. vi. 13, 16, 19. [παριστάνετε] present, or offer up your bodies, it is a word that implies a covenant engagement: if you do not formally, you do virtually and really contract with Satan, and you are true to him and his interest. Alas, that the devil should have so many devoted vassals, and Christ so few servants? Some even wear his badge, speak his language, and dance after him in invisible fetters: God Almighty break this bond of iniquity! Oh that any souls should sell themselves to work iniquity!* that you should barter away soul, body, time, and strength to Satan, for the gratification of an appetite or passion! Lord, put a stop to these frantic sinners. Let covetous misers consider how Ahab bought Naboth's vineyard of the devil, and sold himself for the price; a dear purchase! Let the voluptuous wretch, remember Esau's merchandize of his birthright, and pawning his soul for a mess of pottage. Let the vain-glorious fool, think of Haman, who sold God's people and himself, and all his gain was a halter, and his honour was a high gallows; shame is the promotion of fools.†

3. Some openly disown their interest in God, and pretend to no such title. It is possible some gracious souls dare not say God is theirs in covenant, who yet desire it above the world; I meddle not with those at present. But some from consciousness to themselves, that they have no ground or reason to claim any such

* 1 Kings xxi. 25. † Prov. iii. 35.

interest, will not say so, or if they offer to say, My God, conscience flies in their face, and rebukes them for their presumption; others from ignorance, impenitency, or unbelief make no reckoning of it; but there are some in the world who from a principle of atheism and profaneness, make a mock of such expressions, scoffing at God's covenant people as a company of proud pretenders, and looking upon such a transaction as I have described as a ridiculous fancy: God writes to men the great things of his law, but they are accounted strange things,* (παραδόξα or παρέργα) either,

(1.) Paradoxes or riddles, things above their reach, not belonging to their cognizance, as the people said of Ezekiel, doth he not speak parables? or as Rabbi Nicodemus, how can these things be?† things above us are nothing to us, this man flies over our heads in fanciful, metaphysical notions; thus they judge these divine truths or duties: or,

(2.) They account them by-matters, impertinent speculations, which they are not concerned in, and will not trouble their heads about; let others busy themselves with these nice quiddities of religion, for their parts they have something else to do,these are alien to their more weighty concerns: some men now-a-days are of Festus's humour, who calls religion a business of questions of some people's superstition, "and of one Jesus, that was dead, whom Paul affirmeth to be alive;" hence these ignorant despisers are like Gallio, caring for none of these things;‡ they can be well content that the precisians should please themselves with such airy notions as these, they pretend no skill in them, and can these high blades be as well content to be dealt without a share in them? Well, a time may

* Hos. viii. 12. † Ezek. xx. 49. John iii. 9.
‡ Acts xxv. 19. xviii. 17.

come, that the proudest of them may bespeak God's children as Pharaoh did Moses, "I have sinned against the Lord your God—entreat the Lord your God;"* also other two potent monarchs were forced at last to acknowledge the pre-eminence of the God of the three children and of Daniel: yea, God hath a time to make these diabolists to come and worship before his saints' feet, and to know that he hath loved them.† The poor heathen spake modestly in comparison of pretended Christians who mock those tbat plead a relation to God, censuring them as presumptuous fools, as if they would monopolize God to themselves, and speak exclusively when they say, My God, as if they were hypocrites; but doubtless there are still a people on earth whom God hath secured for himself, to be a people to him for ever, and the Lord is become their God;‡ and if serious holy souls be not they, who are they? let such profligate scorners read, Isa. xxviii. 13, 15—22.

4. Others presume without ground upon their relation to God. The wizard Balaam could say, "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God;"‖ and Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father?" Yet these had a feigned repentance, a backsliding heart, and a whore's forehead; doubtless such presumptuous sinners those are, who lay as confident claim to God as the best, and will not easily be drawn off from this conceit; our Lord himself had much difficulty to convince the Jews that not God, as they peremptorily pretended, but the devil was their father.§ Many are like that madman at Athens, that challenged every ship that came into the harbour for his own; thus they lay their foul hands on that children's bread of gospel privileges which belongs not to

* Exod. x. 16, 17. † Dan. iii. 28. vi. 20. Rev. iii. 9.
‡ 2 Sam. vii. 24. ‖ Numb. xxii. 18. § John viii. 41, 44, 54.

them. Poor sinner, what title canst thou have without an interest in the covenant of grace? What is the covenant to thee without faith? and what kind of faith is that which is not attended with repentance and new obedience? "They that are without Christ, are without God in the world;"* why so? because they are, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," that is, no church members, "strangers from the covenants of promise," that is, they are unavoidably excluded from the first covenant, and have voluntarily excluded themselves from the gospel covenant, by wilful unbelief, "and so are without hope," whatever cobweb hopes they may spin out of their own bowels, they shall be swept away as the spider's web with the besom of destruction; yea, this vain hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.† Ah poor self-deluding presumer, who art in a deep sleep upon the devil's pillow, and dreamest of a title to God, without the conditions to which such a privilege is annexed, thou walkest in a vain show, and when thou awakest in hell torments, thy imaginary conceits will vanish, and thou wilt feel to thy cost, that the tables of the law and the ark of the covenant, always go together; if thou beest not sincerely given up to him, thou art none of his, and he is none of thine.

5. Others would have God in covenant, but then they would capitulate with him, they would foist in new articles. Poor sinners would impose upon the infinitely wise God; his terms will not serve them, but they would prescribe terms of their own, and then they will bargain and barter, and bring him down, as the young man in the gospel, who promised fair with his moral obedience to the outward part of God's law, but when it came to the credence of evangelical per-

* Eph. ii. 12. † Job viii. 14. xi. 20.

fection or gospel sincerity, which consisted in selling all and following Christ, he broke with him, and went away sorrowful, for though he had a respect for Christ and heaven, yet he did not think the enjoyment thereof, would countervail the loss of his great possessions.* Poor souls, will you bargain with the great God for your penny of wordly advantages, or immunity from troubles: what? is not God an all-sufficient God? is not he an exceeding great reward? thou makest thy moan as Amaziah did, "what shall I do for the hundred talents?"† I say, the Lord is able to give thee much more than this, he hath promised, even a hundred fold in this life; and is not that a sufficient harvest to satisfy the most covetous desires?‡ Others reserve some Delilah in their lap, some right-hand sin, which they are loth to part with, they say of this as Naaman of his Rimmon, in this the Lord spare me; nay then saith God, if thou wilt have another husband, thou must have none of me, if thou send any rebel out of the way that ought to be delivered to justice, there is likely to be no league; I will either have the head of Sheba the son of Bichri cast over the wall, or I will plant my batteriug rams against thee; either take me in the way I have proposed, or seek a new master; I will not bate an ace, look out for another with whom thou mayest have intercourse, thou and I must part; I see thou art not sincere, and thou mayest expect to be dealt with as an enemy.

6. Some there are that upon hearing the terms will enter into covenant with God, yes, that they will, but alas, "they do but flatter God with their mouths, and lie unto him with their tongues, for their heart is not right with him, as Israel of old."‖ A forced or feigned

* Matt. xix. 16—22.
† 2 Chron. xxv. 9.
‡ Matt. xix. 29.
‖ Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37.

consent is none at all. Some are like the poor traveller in danger by the robber, he will make him fair promises to get loose out of his hands; mariners will make ample vows in a storm, which they never intend to discharge; as those that pour out a prayer when God's chastisement is on them,* or as it is in the margin, "mutter a secret speech," they are afraid any should hear them, lest they bare witness against them for non-performance. Some are gracious in pangs, graceless at ease; extorted resolutions are but to serve a turn. God sees the unsoundness of men's hearts, thou canst not deceive God, as the Gibeonites cozened Israel;† Israel made fair professions with respect to obedience, yea and called in God for a witness, Jer. xlii. 5; yet they only dissembled in their hearts, ver. 20; but God will not be mocked, he will find you out, if there be an Achan in the camp, God will trouble thee, woe to the false-hearted professor.‡ Others will promise great things for the future, but they have no heart at present; this also is a wretched self-deception, marriage is for the present, but contract is for the future, which may be broken.

7. There are others that are guilty of a sad defection from the engagement they have made; they were unsound in making, and therefore are unfaithful in keeping a covenant.‖ Hypocrites will prove apostates, dissimulation ends in rebellion; if the heart be not right at the beginning, the end will be wrong; an unsound girdle rots; an apple rotten at the core will spread itself to the skin in time. Look to it, you will fall off from your engagements which you do not sincerely make, see an instance of this, in Jer. xxxiv. 15; it is mournful indeed for men to repent of their re-

* Isa. xxvi. 16. † Josh. ix. 11, 14. ‡ Josh. vii. 11, 12, 25.
‖ Ὑποκριταὶ πρόσκαιροι.

penting, to return from their returning. It is a dreadful thing to play fast and loose with God; if it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth it;* covenants are sacred things. How doth God threaten Zedekiah for breaking the oath of allegiance he had sworn to the king of Babylon, God even calls it his oath that he had despised, Ezek. xvii. 18, 19. Oh! but what sorer punishment must they have, that—count the blood of the covenant—an unholy thing; a common thing of no great worth or moment, see Heb. x. 28, 29. This sin of covenant breaking is a complicated evil, how severely doth God challenge his professing people in this Psalm, ver. 16, "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee;"† some read it, why doest thou boast of my covenant with thy mouth? as if he had said, when thy heart is unsound, and thy mouth saith one thing, while thy hands and feet speak a contrary language; thy life gives the lie to thy lips; dost thou think I am such a one as thyself to approve hypocrisy, or indulge thee in thy apostacy? no, no, I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.

(1.) You greatly dishonour God by your apostacy. If a man would study to do religion a mischief, or bring it into discredit, he cannot do it more effectually than follow it a while, and then fall off, this is to gratify the devil and disgrace piety, it is in effect to say, he finds not God so good as he promised, that he hath tried God's ways, and finds them unequal, fruitless, and worse than the ways of sin; O astonishing! "What iniquity, saith God, have your fathers found

* Gal. iii. 15. † Psal. l. 16, 17. Cur ore tuo fœdus meum jactas?

in me, that they are gone far from me, and are become vain?"* Alas, sirs, what fault do you find in God? what wrong hath he done you? hath he been a wilderness to you, or a land of darkness? do you find sin better than holiness? and vanity more satisfying than all-sufficiency? is not God's service, which is perfect freedom, better than Satan's drudgery? wilt thou in sober mood assert that our Lord cannot afford thee real profit, pleasure, and honour? wilt thou set the crown on the devil's head? must he win the garland from Christ in thy esteem? darest thou say thou wast mistaken in thy choice? did God ever give thee occasion thus to challenge or accuse him of any want of goodness or faithfulness? search the records of scripture, or consult the experience of believing souls, have they not spoken well of God? and venturing their souls upon God in this covenant way, they have not been deceived; take heed how thou dost contradict their testimony, dishonour God, and ruin thy own soul.

(2.) By this apostacy you justify the wicked, you harden their hearts, and open their mouths against the ways of God. Even personal miscarriages of real saints, give great "occasion to the enemy to blaspheme,"† much more total apostacy of great professors; what will the world say? they are all of a sort, a pack of hypocrites; now their fair mask is taken off, they appear no better than we; for all their bawling devotion, and censuring us as profane, we shall come off as well as they; let them alone and they will come over to us. Now the wicked world have obtained that occasion against godliness they have long sought; you put a staff into their hands to beat all that fear God, and they besmear the faces of God's children with the dirt

* Jer. ii. 5, 31. † 2 Sam. xii. 14.

they find on your coat; it is true their way of arguing is very fallacious, to conclude all bad, because some professors prove apostates, as if no coin were current because there are some brass shillings or counterfeit money, as if all the apostles were false pretenders because Judas had a devil; yet you give them too much occasion to imagine there is none stable or faithful to God, "woe be to you by whom such offences come;"* will you ruin yourselves and draw others into the same condemnation? will you furnish the wicked with weapons to fight against God, saints, and conviction? this puts a bar into their hearts to shut out Christ; and hardens them in impenitence and antipathy against God.

(3.) By this thou grievest the hearts of God's children, and God takes this as ill as the former; Ezek. xiii. 22, "Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked;" God takes this ill, for his children are very dear unto him. David saith, "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved."† None are such heart-grieving transgressors as those once famous professors. God's children rejoiced at thy covenant engagement, and now lament thy forsaking the holy covenant, therefore have God's servants bewailed Israel's breaking the covenant;‡ and is this nothing to grieve the spirits of God's children? surely this will lie heavy on thee another day, either in repentance or when vengeance is taken. Is it nothing to Israel, to have such a one as Elijah to make intercession to God against them, saying, "the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars," &c.‖ Observe it, what is related as a com-

* Matt. xviii. 7.
† Psalm cxix. 158.
‡ Ezra ix. Neh. ix. Dan. ix.
‖ 1 Kings xix. 10. Rom. xi. 2.

plaint of them, the apostle calls an intercession against them; and if God's children plead against thee, it will be in effect an imprecation against thee. God will hear their sad complaints and it will go ill with thee, thy sins distress the bowels of the saints, when thy faults are mentioned they hide their faces for shame, and cannot say a word for the vindication of such an unhappy being, but fetch a deep sigh, and get into a corner and with grief of heart bewail it; if thou hadst stood firmly to the covenant they would have had wherewith to answer him that reproacheth them,* but now their mouths are stopped, and they are put to the blush when thy name is mentioned. Study Psal. lxix. 26—28, and pray as David, ver. 6, "that none may be ashamed for thy sake."

(4.) You lay a sad foundation of woe, both in this and the other world for yourselves and children, and all that are concerned with you; God will disown you here, and disclaim you at last; he saith, he will avenge the quarrel of his covenant;† never had God a greater controversy with his ancient people than this, so that when their land was laid desolate, and the nations inquired the reason, wherefore the Lord had done thus unto this land? the answer is, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which he made with them;‡ and accordingly this is repeated when the threatening is accomplished, as if there were no other procuring cause of Israel's desolation; so saith Isaiah, chap. xxiv. 5, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, why so? because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." This, this is the capital offence, there needs no coroner's inquest, or

* Psal. cxix. 42. † Lev. xxvi. 25.
‡ Deut. xxix. 23—25. Jer. xxii. 8, 9.

jury's verdict upon whole nations and souls, to know how they come to this dismal end, it is apparent that such a person was a *felo de se*, he committed suicide by violating his covenant; no other disease do pretended Christians die of but this, they stand not faithfully to their covenant. Judas the apostate from Christ, proved a traitor to him, yea a devil against himself, he murdered himself. God leaves such to be *magor missabib*, fear and terror round about, feeling a hell within, affrighted with overwhelming objects, and thinking hell itself is easier than their own consciences. Many instances might be produced of this, Francis Spira, and many more;* I shall select only Sir James Hales, justice of the common pleas, who venturing his life for Queen Mary, by refusing to subscribe to her being disinherited, by the will of king Edward the sixth; yet for his producing the statutes against the pope's supremacy at the sessions, he was cast into prison, and there so cruelly handled and terrified with the apprehension of the torments which were said to be preparing for him, partly by flattery of the bishops, and partly by their threats, he was drawn to recant, after which he fell into such terrors of conscience, that he attempted to kill himself with a knife, yet being by God's providence prevented, and his wounds cured, he was delivered out of prison, and went home to his house, but neither there could he have any inward peace by reason of his apostacy, but setting his house in order, he drowned himself in a river near his house. I pronounce not on his final state who fell through fear, but let wilful apostates look to it, God will not be mocked, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and to feel the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience; that is an awful text against apos-

* Mr. Clark's Examples, vol. 2, fol. 27.

tates, Heb. x. 26—29, "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries," &c. You will say this concerns not me, I am no such apostate, for I never entered into such a solemn covenant with God, I hope God will not charge the sin of covenant-breaking upon me, for I am not guilty of that fault. I answer,

[i.] Whether thou hast actually and formally engaged thyself under thy hand as before described, *de facto*, yea or no, yet *de jure*, of right thou art bound to him, as thou art his creature, to yield to him all the obedience before described, and if thou do not, thou art a false hearted traitor, for thou pretendest to be his subject, and being his real enemy thou must be dealt with as the rest of his enemies are, at present made his foot-stool, and hereafter a faggot in eternal flames.

[ii.] Though thou hast not engaged thyself thus formally, yet thou hast done it implicitly, in every duty, ordinance, or act of worship, wherein thou hast been employed. What religion art thou of? thou wilt say, of the Christian; how dost thou shew it? thou sayest, by waiting on God in his appointments; well then, thou art either sincere or a hypocrite; if sincere, thou art one of the saints that make a covenant with him by sacrifice; if not, thou mockest God, and he will deal with thee as a lying base hypocrite; if thou seem to be serious, he will deal with thee as a perfidious apostate, since thou contradictest thy profession.

[iii.] But be it known to thee, thou wast engaged to God by covenant in thy baptism, and if thou revokest that, thou art a real apostate; thy parents dedicated thee to God, and thou art bound to stand to it, and now at age actually to make a voluntary surrender of

thyself and all that thou art, and hast, to him: and this standing to the baptismal covenant is all that I have in view, and if thou do it not, thou art as really an apostate as a baptized Christian proves a renegado, when he turns a Turk, and God will deal with thee as such.

[iv.] If after all that thou hast heard and read of personal covenanting with God, and hast also seen of its nature and necessity, yet thou still refusest, because thou art loth to lay thyself under such strict bonds, or to be within such narrow limits as the rule of God's word prescribes; be it known unto thee thou doest avowedly take part with Satan, and the flesh, and declarest thou wilt not be on God's side, and that, because thou wouldest have elbow room for thy lusts, in this thou demonstratest that thou art a hypocrite, for thy heart and life say, "I will not have this man to rule over me;" well this king having received his kingdom, will say peremptorily, "but those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."* God will not only reckon with you for the sins you have committed, but for the duties omitted which you are commanded to practise; your sin will be as much aggravated by wilfully refusing to enter this covenant when you were called to it, as if you had engaged yourselves in it, and then openly violated it. You are God's tenants, and whether you seal articles or not, you are bound to pay him rent, and if you will neither do it, nor say, you will do it, be it known to you, your great landlord will make distress upon you, to your greater damage, and turn you out, and cast you into the prison of hell, yea, and in this God doth you no wrong, but is equal in these proceedings; this is clear from the parable of the

* Luke xix. 14, 27.

talents, the man was condemned as a wicked and slothful servant, that had not improved, though he had not wasted his talent, Matt. xxv. 24—30. Woe to that soul, that is found out of covenant with God at that solemn day of accounts; and woe, double woe to him who pretended to enter into a covenant engagement, but did it not, or renounced it, for he shall be cut asunder, and shall have his portion with the hypocrites, that had neither part nor lot in this matter, "there shall be weeping" for their loss, "and gnashing of teeth,"* that is, at themselves for their folly and unaccountable madness; mind the text, this doom is passed on hypocrites, for all the world of unregenerated souls pass under the one of these regiments of hell, either unbelievers without the church, heathen and infidels, or hypocrites within the church; and of the two, hypocrites will have the hottest place in that infernal lake of fire and brimstone, for, as one saith, other sinners are but as younger brethren to the hypocrite, under whom as the great heir, they receive their portion of damnation bequeathed to them by divine justice, and justly, for covenant-breaking is oftner than once reckoned amongst unnatural sins;† perjury, treachery, and perfidiousness are condemned by the law and light of nature, but unnatural sins under gospel helps are sadly aggravated, and bring the most awful plagues in this and the other world.

* Matt. xxiv. 51. † Rom. i. 31. 2 Tim. iii. 3.

CHAP. XIII.

COUNSEL AND INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO SINNERS THAT THEY MAY ENTER INTO A PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT TO BE THE LORD'S.

SECONDLY, Something must now be said by way of counsel and advice to those who have not thus engaged. In prosecuting which, it would be easy to exceed due limits by saying much, and yet all might be too little to prevail with sinners to enter into this covenant engagement.

I confess this business of persuasion is beyond the power of men and angels; man may urge, God alone must bow the will, we may use words, God must do the work, "God shall enlarge," in the margin, persuade "Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem;" omnipotence only can do it with effect. God makes volunteers in the day of his power,* he that teacheth hearts hath his throne in heaven; yea he only that made heaven and earth can prevail with them. O thou infinite Jehovah, who garnishedst the heavens and laidest the foundations of earth, let down thy cords of a man, and draw sinners to thee, cast forth the bands of love, and fasten them to thee, take the devil's yoke off their necks, and with loving-kindness draw their gross hearts upwards.† Lord Jesus, by virtue of thy being lifted up from the earth on thy cross, and in thy resurrection and ascension, draw all men to thee, diffuse the savour of thy good ointments, that virgin souls may love and follow thee.‡ O blessed Spirit, that like the wind, blowest where and when thou listest, gently breathe upon some

* Gen. ix. 27. Psal. cx. 3. † Hos. xi. 4. Jer. xxxi. 3.
‡ John xii. 32. Song. i. 3, 4.

immortal soul, and carry it with a swift course to the blessed haven.* O produce the grace of faith which unites sinners to Christ by a mystical union, beget love which connects them with thee by a moral union, "that being joined to the Lord, they may be one spirit with him."† O that poor sinners may be married to thyself. Ministers are not suitors for themselves but for thee, we invoke divine assistance in our entrance, and wait for influences of grace now, and for full success after we have done our work. "Lord, water this seed."

I shall next address my fellow sinners, methinks you should not need many arguments to draw you into this blessed bond. The infinite Jehovah presents himself to be your God in covenant; he that might in justice, and could by his power send you off to hell; it is he that invites, persuades and urges you to give your consent to take him as your God, and give up yourselves to him, he waits your leisure, he expects your answer, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."‡ Who would not entertain such a guest, who would not marry such a husband? take a view of him, see if you can find any like him, doth he not deserve your choice? how can you for shame resist the powerful rhetoric of the Prince of peace? saying, open to "me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."‖ Unto you, O men, I call, not to angels, to you, simple ones, that you may be wise, to you, sinners, that you may be pardoned;§ to you, O beggar, I call, that you may be rich, to you, bankrupts, that I may pay your debts; to you, enemies,

* John iii. 8. † 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‡ Psal. xxiv. 7.
‖ Song. v. 2. § Prov. viii. 4, 5.

that you may be reconciled; to you strangers, that you may be brought nigh, and be of the household of faith; I call you from a curse to inherit a blessing—from enmity to friendship; from Satan's drudgery, to perfect liberty—from wrath to love—from hell to heaven: is not the design good and highly rational? what can you object? is it not an easy and honourable way of inheriting all things, to give your consent? what can you do less? is there any thing unreasonable in the conditions? what can you say against it? what excuses have you now, that you would dare to plead in the solemn day of reckoning? can you answer all the arguments I have produced for it? give your conscience leave to act, speak like men, what say you? shall the God of heaven, or the devil your sworn enemy have your consent? I bind you not to words, but to the thing; do it in what form or manner you think fit, only do it seriously, and scripturally; give God your heart, profess it with your tongue, subscribe it with your hand, that you will have none but him, that you will belong to none but him. 1. As you would be and be called saints, and "be found written among the living in Jerusalem,"* which I am sure will signify more than to be enrolled saints in the pope's calendar. 2. As you would have the privilege of saints, and would have the benefit of this new covenant charter, reconciliation, adoption, justification, the promises of this life and that to come. 3. As you would be found of him in peace when you come to die; even a Balaam will desire to die the death of the righteous, for the end of such is peace.† 4. As you would have your persons accepted, your prayers heard in trouble, or as you would have Christ to mingle his incense with your

* Isaiah iv. 3. † 2 Peter iii. 14. Numb. xxiii. 10. Psalm xxxvii. 37.

oblations, or have God to speak peace to you.* 5. As you would have God's purpose of grace, or Christ's purchase cleared up to you, for such as God chooseth, do sincerely choose him, and all that the Father gave to Christ to redeem, come to him in this way of personal engagement.† 6. As you would be blessings to your families and all about you, O make a covenant with the Lord, that his fierce wrath may turn away from you and yours; if you turn to God, your brethren and children may find compassion, hath not God's wrath lain long and heavy on us?‡ is this an expedient to turn it away, and will you be so cruel as not to take this course to remove it? 7. As you desire to have your souls bound up in the bundle of life, with the Lord your God, and not to be gathered with sinners; as you would be the Lord's when he maketh up his jewels, and be set upon his right hand at the great day along with the sheep,‖ I beseech you make this covenant: on which hand would you be found at that day? 8. And as you would be admitted into heaven, as you would have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city; observe it, in that text covenant relation stands between obedience and recompence; you cannot do God's commandments, and you shall never enter into the celestial city, except you have right to the tree of life, but this title comes by a covenant engagement.§

You see then the matter is of moment, it is as much as heaven and hell come to. Everlasting salvation and damnation depend upon it; mistake not, I mean not on the form of words, but upon the substance of

* Psal. lxxxv. 8. Rev. viii. 3. †2 Pet. i. 10. John vi. 37
‡ 2 Chron. xxix. 10. xxx. 8, 9.
‖ 1 Sam. xxv. 29. Ps. xxvi. 9. Mal. iii. 17, 18. Matt. xxv. 33.
§ Rev. xxii. 14.

this personal covenanting; heaven hath its proper heirs; of the Lord you shall receive the reward of inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ;* observe it, inheritance is only for children, natural or adopted, God gives not heaven as wages for work, but God makes men heirs, and so provides an inheritance for them. There is a necessity both for a real and relative change, and thus God makes all his children meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and God is daily working them up to this self-same thing by his Spirit in ordinances and providences;† the foundation is laid in covenant relation; there is not one mansion above prepared for an uncovenanted soul; the covenant is the chariot paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem,‡ none go to heaven but they that ascend this chariot; this is the causeway leading to the bridge of Christ's merits, which will carry you over the gulf of God's wrath; if you go the lower way of the old covenant you are swallowed up, and drowned, and lost for ever. Ah sirs, you have been once cast and undone by its violation, trust not to it again, cast not off gospel grace, ruin not your souls by wilful impenitence.

You will say, no, God forbid that I should again reject this covenant, I am willing to lay hold of it, but I know not which way to proceed, I want some one to lead me by the hand into and through this important affair.

I answer, cast your eyes back on the foregoing directory, consider the preparatives to it, labour for the things that are essentially necessary to the due performance of it, as knowledge of the gospel terms of the covenant, breaking off a confederacy with all competitors, a will submissive to give entire consent, an humbled

* Col. iii. 24. † Col. i. 12. 2 Cor. v. 5. ‡ Song. iii. 9, 19.

heart, a holy resolution, right and sincere intentions, and lying low at the throne of grace in prayer for counsel and purity of motives, for assisting grace, and gracious reception; study also the circumstantial furtherances, in reference to time, place, manner, and helps; and then read over the scripture pattern for giving your consent, both in point of acceptance and dedication, if you have a real disposition towards the engagement, you will be glad of this method, and fall immediately to practice; and indeed what are sermons, and treatises for but for practice? If you approve the design, set about it, defer not one day, after conviction hath seized on thy conscience.

I shall only add a few more directions in this case.

1. Deal faithfully and effectually in searching your hearts and state. Self-ignorance will be the great impediment of personally entering into a covenant to be the Lord's; if you be ignorant and know not how things are with you, or partial and unfaithful in your search, you will go hand over head about this matter, and you will make nothing of it. Tradesmen cast up their books, and see how they stand, before they go to their chapmen, to make new bargains; so must you, keep an audit in your own souls, that you may set things in readiness for the great assizes; take a true account and estimate of your state; know for certainty what covenant you are under; you will never much care for the new till you be worn and wearied out with your old ruined state; "we are kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed," Gal. iii. 23; the words are very emphatical, (ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα,* συνκεκλεισμένοι) they are military terms, and signify a strong guard set upon the sinner, after he is condemned by martial law, and

* Φρουρείσθαι, Est præsidio custodiri.—*Poli Critic.*

must be brought forth to execution; or it relates to a schoolmaster shutting up his scholar for correction, it is the same with the law being a schoolmaster, ver. 24, keeping a person under severe discipline; both are imperious and rigorous; the soul then is under the rigour intended here, not only really, but sensibly; when the poor sinner lies under such apprehensions of his sad condition, and is kept in with dread of legal punishment, as a slave in the gallies, then and never till then doth he desire and prize liberty. O that poor souls did duly consider the lamentable state they are in under the old covenant, then they would never be at rest till they had struggled from under that yoke, and got into gospel bonds. Simon Peter tells Simon Magus, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity,"* and this startled that grand hypocrite, and made him solicit prayers; it is a dreadful case, for poor sinners to be on the confines of hell, and not know it; the knowledge of a disease is the first step to a cure: well then, deal faithfully with thy own soul; what have you the candle of the Lord for, but to search into the inmost parts of the belly?† Be not like some crafty constables who ought to present misdemeanors, but bring in *all well*, or are loth to find the thief they pretend to search for. Passing a false judgment on yourselves, may cost you your souls; it is dangerous to stumble on the threshold; it is ominous to lay the first stone wrong; you must dig deep if you will build high;‡ you must search the wound if you expect a perfect cure, a sore may seem a little matter with a small orifice, but may be hard to be cured, because of its being difficult to find the bottom: thus it is with the soul, thy heart is deep, Satan is subtle, thy eyes are dim, the matter is intricate, there

* Acts viii. 23, 24. † Prov. xx. 27. ‡ Luke vi. 48.

needs much care and pains to untwist and put to rights this snarled skein, and find out the bottom and end of your actings, thousands are mistaken, why may not thy soul mistake? The flaunting professors of the Laodicean church had vapours fuming up into their heads, which cast them into a sleep, wherein they dreamed that they were rich, and increased with goods, and needed nothing, while indeed they were poor and miserable*—and till they were convinced thereof, they would not come to the market to buy gospel commodities; "They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick."† O for a sense of danger! All the world cannot drag that man to covenanting, that either thinks he need not, or imagines himself already to be in covenant with God. This is my first counsel; be particular about thy state, for physic is not to be given to persons asleep, but waking.

2. Stand still and make a pause and stop in your progress. This is God's method with sinners, he hedgeth up their way with thorns, and makes a wall, that they may not find or follow their sinful paths; sometimes he brings them into a wilderness, and there speaks to their hearts, he brings them under the rod, and so into this bond of the covenant; thus divine grace dealt with Manasseh, the prodigal, and many more,‡ It were much easier and not so costly, if sinners would put a stop to themselves by serious reflection and due consideration, whither they are going, and what will be the issue of the courses they are taking; it becomes the sinner to bethink himself,‖ or bring things back upon his heart, to weight his spirit with a due sense of what he hath been doing, and to what

* Rev. iii. 16—18. † Matt. ix. 12.

† Hos. ii. 6, 14. Ezek. xx. 37. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12. Luke xv. 17. ‖ 2 Chron. vi. 37.

these courses tend; standing still is something towards returning, retrograde motions begin in consideration; "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies;"* the hand of the clock follows the motion of the inward wheels; if the heart be turned, the course will be changed, and consideration is in order of nature before conversion, and conversion of heart is the substance of this covenant, all outward significations thereof will follow after. I have no hopes of that sinner that will not say, what have I done? or what must I do? "but turns to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle."† I like a pondering, considering soul; however some may call such a one melancholy, and think he will go mad, yet when the the sinner is besieged by the justice of God, "and the terrors of the Almighty do set themselves in array against him,"‡ it becomes the perplexed soul, to withdraw himself into some solitary recesses, to parley and consult about this weighty affair, to consider of the terms proposed, and whether it be not the best course to accept them, and so surrender all to him that summons him. O sinner, dost thou not see volleys of bullets in the threatenings flying about thine ears? dost thou not feel his darts and arrows entering into thy soul? and art thou not afraid of being taken by storm? what quarter canst thou expect, if thy rebellious will yield not, consider then what thou hast to do? a breach is made in thy chief bulwarks already, surrender or die. Art thou not ready to say, O poor creature that I am, what a fool am I to march on Jehu-like in this broad way to hell? how oft would God have stopped my course, but I would not turn; I am now near the end of my fond race, I now see death before me, if I step forward I may drop into hell, my sins will find me

* Psal. cxix. 59. † Jer. viii. 6. ‡ Job. vi. 4.

out, my pleasant morsels will be bitterness in the end. O that these chains were knocked off that bind me so fast to Satan! Alas, I see I cannot set myself at liberty, I am bound hand and foot in the grave of sin, and cannot come forth till the omnipotent Jesus call, and say, as to Lazarus, sinner come forth; I am not only without strength, but dead in trespasses and sins;* I cannot lift a hand or subscribe my name, much less raise my heart God-wards. My heart is locked up against God, and I cannot rise out of my bed of sloth to put back the bar of my obstinate will, that shuts out my Lord;† nay, I find a baneful enmity, that opposeth the terms of the covenant. O the malignity of my degenerate nature! I am ashamed, I have so long wrangled against covenant terms, and yet I see plainly I must submit, all the world cannot help me, if I have not help from above; truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills or multitude of mountains;‡ the goodliest flowers of created comforts perish in my hand, and why should I lay them to my heart? away with these trifles, I want and wait for something more suitable and durable; I will run from this poor perishing world, as vermin from a falling house; these sweet flowers become offensive weeds; this staff I leaned on is become a broken reed, yea a pricking briar, it tempts, perplexes, and defiles my soul; "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies."‖ I look through these empty nothings; behold I spy a God, a Christ, a heaven, and some divine cordials for my fainting soul. O how may I come to enjoy God! I hear of a gospel covenant that unites God and sinners; how must my name be put in? I must choose God, and devote myself to him. O that I could do

* Rom. v. 6. Eph. ii. 1. † Song. v. 3, 4.
‡ Jer. iii. 23. ‖ Jonah ii. 8.

both in truth, judgment, and righteousnes.* Ministers tell me of the covenant, they require my consent, my heart echoes, as thou hast said, so must we do; there is no dallying in so weighty a case, one thing is needful, God commands it, my soul needs it, I must do it;† only I would not do it as some rash spirits, that huddle up a wedding in all haste, and afterwards have time to repent of it; I would not thus make more haste than good speed, lest I make a nullity of that which should bring me into a state of friendship with God; I will consider what I do, and do what I have duly considered and concluded upon.

3. Let your hearts be endeared to and join in with God's covenant people. As this is the first movement God-wards, so it is the first of those duties and characteristics whereby a well disposed soul discovers itself. Converting grace turns the hearts of parents to children, and the hearts of children to their fathers;‡ see the notable description of gospel covenanters, Jer. l. 4, 5, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping;" strange! to see these uniting, these that had been at such a distance, the one worshipping the Lord at Jerusalem, the other the calves at Dan and Bethel. How comes this? Why converting grace links them together, and the covenant links them both to God. O, saith the poor backsliding Ephraimite, that I could be like the true Israelite, in whom is no guile! what a blind fool was I, that thought piety but needless singularity, that looked upon godly persons as fanatic precisians! O now methinks, there is a beauty in holiness, and gracious persons are the excellent in the earth, in whom is all my delight, I will be their companion, I am determin-

* Jer. iv. 2. † Ezra x. 12. ‡ Mal. iv. 6.

ed to be their fellow traveller towards Zion. O how blessed are pardoned souls! Blessed are the undefiled in their way; would to God my soul were in their soul's case.* O that I were in such a one's condition, though I had not a rag to cover me, a morsel to eat, or a penny in my purse, nay, nor a whole bone in my skin. O how happy is that people whose God is the Lord;† these are pearls, others are dross. Methinks these covenant people of God, are better in rags, than others in robes, I would rather be with them in prison wearing fetters, than with wicked men on a throne with a sceptre in my hand; it is indeed the very summit of my ambition to be one of those saints of the Most High God; I will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew and say, "I will go with thee, for I have heard that God is with thee," I will live and die amongst God's covenant people; God forbid that I should forsake assembling with them,‡ I will join with them, ask and take their wholesome counsel, and submit to their censures and corrections; "let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head;"‖ I will never forsake the brotherly covenant; Lord, make me worthy of this heavenly society; I am sure two are better than one, if I fall my fellow will help me up, if I be cold my company will warm me, if I be weak in fighting I shall have assistance from the saints, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken;§ the more the better, the more in company the sweeter the society; in order to my friendship with God, let me have friendship with his friends; though I was hateful and hating God's children,¶ and there was jarring between

* Psal. xvi. 3. cxix. 63. xxxii. 1. cxix. 1, 2.
† Psal. cxliv. 15. ‡ Zech. viii. 23. Heb. x. 25.
‖ Psal. cxli 5. § Eccl. iv. 9—12. ¶ Tit. iii. 3.

me and them, which made discord, yet now since gospel grace hath laid hold on my heart, I am become tuneable among them that fear God, and O that we could all chime in one harmonious concert; I will live and love, as if my heart had forsaken my own breast and crept into my brother's bosom, and this will let him into my heart, that we may both have one soul, and combine to promote the same designs.

4. Pray much. I begin and end with this needful exhortation, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." *

Quest. May or must a soul out of covenant pray, when his prayer is sin?

Answ. Prayer is a means whereby we offer worship to God;† and also a means whereby we receive grace from God.‡ It is a natural duty whereby men acknowledge God to be their maker and benefactor. Prayer is the soul's movement God-wards, saith a good divine, and to say an unbeliever should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God; desire is the soul of prayer, and who dares say to the wicked, desire not God, Christ, or faith, desire not to be better, or to engage to be better; Simon Magus was to pray for pardon, so must thou.‖ We would willingly give encouragement to returning souls to strow their way to the throne of grace. I do not, saith one, fear a rebuke for sending such customers to God's door, he is not so thronged with such suitors, as that he can find in his heart to send thee away with a denial, when thou castest down thine arms, and art desirous to be at peace with him. Cheer up, poor creature, knock boldly at his door, thou hast a friend in God's bosom, that will procure thee welcome; he that without thy pray-

* Matt. xxvi. 41. † Medium cultus. ‡ Medium gratiæ.
‖ Acts viii. 22.

er provided this covenant, will he not now upon thy prayer take thee into covenant? fear not speeding, our Redeemer hath paid for a new stock of grace, wherewith thy bankrupt soul may again set up; look up to Christ, who hath a bank of grace with him, "and of his fulness you shall receive even grace for grace; he hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious," that he might distribute those gifts to poor worthless sinners.* It is not such as are without sin, but sometimes the chief of sinners that have a great dole at his door. Come, man, and put in for thy share, lie low at the throne of grace, for grace to help thee, in this time of need;† say, Lord, it is true I have been a rebellious wretch indeed, but did Christ receive nothing for such? I have an unbelieving heart, but there is faith paid for in thy covenant; Christ shed his blood that thou mightest shed forth thy Spirit on poor sinners. I find upon record, that there are some to whom thou wilt give a new heart, and new spirit, yea put thy Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in thy statutes;‡ and why may not I have a share in this promise? It is the mercy I want, it is the mercy thou art able to give; if a beggar should promise me a thousand pounds a year, I should slight it, and ask where he would have it? but if a prince promise more I would go after it, because he hath an estate that bears proportion to his promise. Lord, thou hast not outbid thy ability, thou art able to draw my heart, and fill me with grace, thou art faithful that hast promised, make thy promise good to me; I confess I have forfeited thy help, and slighted thy grace, but I will now set myself to comply with thy commands, I am ashamed of my folly, I remember my ways with shame that

* John i. 16. Psalm lxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 8.
† Heb. iv. 16. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

thou mayest remember thy covenant and establish it with me; "I bemoan myself before thee, turn me and I shall be turned."* Lord, as I need all the mercies of the covenant, so I beg all the graces thereof, and a heart to perform all the duties of it. Lord, do thou make a divorce betwixt my soul and every sin; sin parteth God and me, let sin and my soul be parted, that God and my soul may be united; I would thrust the sacrificing knife of thy word, into the heart of my dearest lust. Be thou my God, holy Lord, and make me thy child; "Put thy law into my heart, and write it in my inward parts;" work me upwards towards thee as my centre.

Thus pray, thus bemoan thyself, thus pour out thy soul to God, and when thou hast done, fall close to the work, use God's appointed means. That is a false heart, that sits still itself, while it sets God to work; as he that, when his cart was fast in a slough, cried, Jupiter help, but would not put his own shoulder to the wheel; or he that lay in his bed and said, "Oh that this were to work!"† As endeavours without God cannot, so God without endeavours will not ordinarily help you. Be importunate with God, and laborious in your actings; let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens, that is, saith Bernard, "let us pray and use endeavour;"‡ this is the likeliest way to accomplish this great affair.

But I shall at present say no more to persuade or direct poor careless souls in this business of personal covenanting; only I shall add this one caution, that you beware of a formal, overly, hypocritical doing of this. Be serious and sincere, or you make nothing of it; I am most afraid of this; strength of reason, example,

* Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. Jer. xxxi. 18.

† O utinam hoc esset laborare! ‡ Oremus et laboremus.

or conscience may prevail with you to do something, yet that something may prove nothing to the purpose; we use to say, as good never a whit as never the better. God will try you, "your work shall be manifest, the day shall declare it;"* you may cheat man, but you cannot cozen God; our dear Lord, "whose eyes are like a flame of fire,"† will find you out at the great day; if that be not found in thee which constitutes a saint, he will disown thee for all thy fawning on him with specious performances; you may claim acquaintance with him, but unless you have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, he will say to you as he answers those presuming hang-byes in the gospel, who begin to say, "we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," but he shall say, "I tell you I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;"‡ this is plain dealing, our Lord is peremptory in it; I tell you, will you not believe me? you shall take it for a final answer, a full decision of the case; you shall be no longer in suspense; I told you enough before in my word, but you would not believe me, still you would hope the best, and satisfy yourselves with plausible pretences, which I now tell you plainly, and you shall feel to your cost, could never bear water or bring you off in this day of trial; I must now send you off, begone, "I tell you I know you not;" I am sure I know all mine, my saints made a covenant with me by sacrifice, so did not you, I find not my sheep-mark upon you; it is true, you attended on me in outward duties and ordinances, but the chief thing was wanting, personal covenanting, therefore you are none of mine; get you gone, "depart from me ye workers of iniquity." O overwhelming word! O dreadful disappointment! None can come to

* 1 Cor. iii. 13. † Rev. i. 14. ‡ Luke xiii. 26, 27.

heaven without Christ's leave and love, he hath the key of David, he is the porter of heaven's gates, you must keep in with him, or never think to enter. As the story goes of Colman and Wilfrid, disputing about the time of Easter before king Oswy, Colman urged the example of St. John, Wilfrid of St. Peter, to whom Christ had committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which the king hearing, concluded this controversy thus; I will not gainsay such a porter as this, lest when I come to the doors of heaven, I find none to open to me, being under his displeasure.* I might say much more; make a covenant with God, through Christ, and keep that covenant, lest when you expect admittance, you meet with a repulse from him that hath power to open and shut heaven.

CHAP. XIV.

ADMONITION AND CONSOLATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FORMED A COVENANT ENGAGEMENT.

THIRDLY, Another sort of persons concerned in the application, are persons really and sincerely in covenant with the Lord. And I shall address myself to such on these two accounts:—

1. By way of admonition, for their faults.

2. By way of consolation, and resolution of their doubts.

1. Though pious souls may have entered into a covenant with the Lord, yet still they are faulty and defective in many things, wherein we have all reason to

* Speed's Hist. pag. 348.

take shame to ourselves, and be really humbled. I shall not repeat what I have elsewhere fully enlarged upon, their bargaining and compounding about these mercies; their not living upon, or not living up to these mercies; their living unholy and unsteadily, which you may see dilated upon, in the Treatise entitled "Sure Mercies of David," 418—431.

I shall but briefly glance at some few faults relating to this point.

(1.) God's dear children have not so solemnly set about this engagement as they ought; even those that have occasionally done what is implied, have not made it their business, to manage it; it may be you have owned your God in prayer, in hearing, or at the Lord's table; but then you have not set apart time for a due transacting of this. How few Christians have made this their chief concern? How few ministers have made it the subject of their preaching, when without it all our preaching signifies nothing? What are we better if we could get people to attend on all ordinances, and to comply with all God's commands, if they be not joined to God by a personal covenant? You make conscience of praying, reading, hearing, and partaking of the Lord's supper ,and why not of this? If this be to be united and mingled with all other duties, yea, if they be in some sense but subordinate to covenanting and communion with God, why may you not, nay, why should you not, set some time apart purposely for this transaction? Is there any thing more necessary? Why may not the lines of your devotion be reduced to this as the centre? since all you do signifies nothing without it; God forbid that Christians should do this, only by the by; you should say, I am the Lord's, profess your subjection,* yield yourselves to the Lord,

* Isa. xliv. 5. 2 Cor. ix. 13.

avouch God to be yours, and yourselves to be his;* what reason have you to be so averse and backward in binding yourselves to the Lord? are you ashamed of him, or are you afraid of being too good? I am really ashamed when I read how many in former times devoted themselves to a monastic life. Mr. Speed tells us of Ino king of the West-Saxons, who resigned his kingdom, went to Rome, professed religion, and there died.† Sibba king of the East-Saxons, turned monk. Offa likewise put on a cowl and went to Rome. Osith wife of king Sighere, and Keneswif wife of king Offa, took upon themselves religious vows. Yea, he saith, that no less than eight kings of the Saxons gave up the world, and became devotees. How may their zeal condemn our slackness? It is a sad thing, that men should be more forward in unscriptural superstition, than God's children in complying with a divine institution. The Lord awake our spirits, to set ourselves more solemnly about this work, and humble us for indifference of spirit about it.

(2.) God's children have not exactly and resolutely performed their vows and covenants. God convinceth and shameth the people of Israel, because they had not obeyed his call and commands, when the Rechabites had resolutely complied with their fathers' will, "to drink no wine, nor build houses, nor sow seed;"‡ shall an ancestor's impositions have more authority than God's injunctions? Alas, that we should have more regard to men's requirements, and that too in indifferent things, than to God's commandments which are absolutely necessary to salvation; but this is our case, yea and our sin is more aggravated when we have laid ourselves under vows, and do not make conscience of per-

* 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

† Speed's Hist. pag. 309. ‡ Jer. xxxv. 6, 14. 18.

forming them. Rich Jacob forgot what poor Jacob promised: it is an ordinary fault; "they like men," in the margin, like Adam, "have transgressed the covenant, they have dealt treacherously against me," Hos. vi. 7. Alas, that regenerated Christians, who have the image of the second Adam, should so resemble their old father Adam! how inconstant are our spirits, we have cause to complain that "our righteousness is as the morning cloud or early dew;" alas, we are as a backsliding heifer, and have reason to fear that "an enemy shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because we have transgressed God's covenant and trespassed against his law."* Heathen constancy may shame our instability: M. Attilius Regulus, a Roman, being taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, was sent by them to Rome, to treat of peace and exchange of prisoners, being charged to return which he promised to do; when he was at Rome he counselled the senate to continue the war with Carthage, and though he infallibly knew a cruel death awaited him, if he returned, yet he went back to perform his promise, affirming that faith was to be kept with an enemy, and being returned he was put to a severe death; they placed him in a kind of chest driven full of nails, whose points wounding him, did not allow him a moment's ease either day or night; they cut off his eye-lids, and other members; so that by pining, by pain, and by being kept for ever awake, and at last nailed to a cross, he died.† O how may this instance of fidelity condemn the slippery spirits of professed Christians in matters of greater moment! How little do we make conscience of the promises we make to God? Are not some of us diverted from duty with threats? Are not some drawn to sin with men's fair words? Have not profits, pleasures, honours of this

* Hos. vi. 4. iv. 16. viii. 1. † Sleidan's Com. lib. i. p. 17.

world bewitched some of us, and at least slackened our motion heaven-ward? O sirs, see to it, "take heed, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;"* be afraid of it, lest any "of you fail of the grace of God,"† lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled, "for if any man draw back, my soul, saith God, shall have no pleasure in him;"‡ I will utterly disclaim him; let me therefore solemnly charge and require you to make good your vows, as ever you expect help from God in your next straits, lest God upbraid you as he did Israel, and threaten, "that he will deliver you no more;"‖ or as he threatens, Jer. xi. 9, 11, "Because they had broken his covenant," God threatens "to bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape, yea, though they cry unto the Lord, he will not hearken to them;" nothing renders God so inexorable as covenant breaking, and nothing so covers our faces with shame, and stops our mouths under new fears, and in new straits, as slipperiness of spirit in keeping covenants made in former straits. Look therefore to it.

(3.) Another fault which persons who have taken upon themselves the bonds of a covenant are usually guilty of, is calling in question the reality of their engagement and title to God, upon every failing, rising of guilt, or temptation of Satan. I confess, if a person fall into gross enormities, or a course of decay, he may justly call in question his sincerity and dig into the very foundation; but that the soul should be daunted or disquieted by every undermining surmise, suggested by a malicious enemy to disturb its peace, or obstruct

* Heb. iii. 12. † Heb. xii. 15. Μὴ τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ της χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ, i. e. fall from the grace of God.
‡ Heb. x. 38. ‖ Judg. x. 10, 13, 14.

its progress is insufferable. For as it savours too much of a legal spirit, so it is an indication of a soul's forgetting the terms of the gospel covenant, and hankering more than is meet after the covenant of works. What would a husband say, if his wife, instead of expressing her delight in her present husband, should day and night do nothing but weep and cry, thinking of her former husband that is dead? "Ye are become dead to the law," saith the apostle, "that ye should be married to another;"* the law as a covenant, is dead to the soul of one under the new covenant; now, "thy sorrow for defect of thy own righteousness," saith a good divine, "which hinders thy rejoicing in Christ, is but a whining after thy other husband, and this he takes unkindly, that thou art not well pleased to lie in the bosom of Christ, and have thy happiness from him, as with your old husband."† Mistake me not, I do not say, you should not grieve for your faults and defects; nay, thou art not sincere if thou do not, yet thou errest in calling thy state into question because thereof, and robbing thyself of that joy in the Lord thou mightest have. Alas, the joy of some troubled spirits runs quite out at the crannies of their imperfect duties and graces; they cannot believe so firmly, pray so fixedly, walk so exactly as they desire, as God requires, as others attain to; and therefore they are no saints, no children. It is not possible that ever a child of God had such a heart as they have. Thus they sit languishing and desponding, and forget the privileges of the gospel covenant, which admits of sincerity and covers infirmities. I would ask thee, soul, whether thou didst not seriously, deliberately, and understandingly at first give thy consent to the terms thereof? Didst thou not count the cost, and reckon upon dif-

* Rom. vii. 4. † Gurnal's Spir. Armour, part i. p. 294.

ficulties, and consider whether in the strength of Christ thou wast capable of performing it? and after many disputes with thyself and anxious fears, thou didst strike the bargain. It is recorded of Augustus Cæsar, that "when he made a great muster in Mars' field, a multitude of people being there, an eagle often fluttered about him, and then went upon a neighbouring temple built by Agrippa, and sat upon the first letter of his name, which being observed, he commanded his colleague Tiberius to make those vows that were wont to be made for the next period of five years ensuing, for though all things were ready for the solemnities of those vows, yet he refused to make vows, which he should not live to perform."* This was commendable in this poor heathen, that he would make no vows but what he had a probable prospect of a capacity to perform; and didst not thou consider all circumstances, and yet by the grace of God didst proceed in thy proposed design; and that which discouraged this great man, animated thee; namely, fear of approaching death? and didst thou not undertake it as in the presence of the all-seeing God, inquiring if thou hadst any by-ends, renouncing self, and suspecting thy hypocrisy? and thou didst then think thou wast sincere, otherwise thou durst not have done it; and shall one dash of the devil's malicious pen expunge all that thou didst transact with so much care and scrupulousness? Wilt thou gratify that envious one, who could not hinder thy covenanting, but now seeks to spoil thy comfort? When a man hath made a purchase, and his title is clear according to the judgment of persons learned in the law, his writings confirmed according to law and custom, will he regard every trivial objection foisted in by an impertinent caviller? It is a fond, foolish thing

* Suet. in Octavio, Cap. 97.

to run after every dog that barks at you, your best course is not to regard them, but hold on your way, as Job expresses himself and tells Satan;* and as Nehemiah said to Samballat, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down, why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?"† So do you, mind heart-work and hand-work, be intent on the work and worship of God; hold on in prayer, reading, hearing, mortifying sensual appetites, walking with God, with a solemn reliance and recumbency upon God, and this will sooner clear thy sincerity and relation to God than a thousand disputes; and when thou canst spy a fit season to examine those objections that are material, do it thoroughly by scripture proof, that you may effectually quell them, and have something to answer them if ever they return upon you. One lively exercise of grace or improving of a scripture promise will more satisfy your souls than many disputes.

(4.) Once more, those who have engaged in a covenant transaction, are too apt to forget Jesus Christ the mediator of the covenant, and this both in our first entering into the covenant, and afterwards; both in point of assistance to take him along with us, and in point of acceptance, when we feel defects or are chargeable with deficiency. Alas sirs, I fear Jesus Christ is little regarded as he should be; to sincere covenanters I hope Christ is not a "stumbling-stone or rock of offence,"‡ but I fear he is not so precious or an honour as they ought to account him. Alas, how can you bear up without this foundation? how can you hold together with the building without this corner stone? how can you come to God but by him? how can you be accepted but in the Beloved?‖ If you lay too much

* Job xvii. 9. † Neh. vi. 3. ‡ 1 Peter ii. 5—8.
‖ Eph. i. 6. ii. 20—22.

stress on covenanting or keeping it, you invalidate all you have done; you submit not to the righteouness of God, if you go about to establish your own righteousness.* Thou hast been praying, thy heart was enlarged, thou hast received O what quickenings! thou hast covenanted, and been helped to perform thy vows, dost thou not secretly applaud thyself in all this? and think, now surely God will own me, for my heart was much carried out? but where is Christ? is he set by as a cipher? O take heed of this deceit, there is a snake in the grass; you will say, but Christ is understood and implied, and why not expressed? Is it acting with propriety, for a servant to bring a present to a person of quality, and not name his master, in whose name he comes? should not the principal verb be put in? what good sense can you make without it? None but Christ, none but Christ, said the martyr Lambert in the flames, lifting up his burning fingers. Augustine abated his delight in Cicero's Hortensius, when he fonnd not the name of Christ in it; your duty and covenant engagement signify nothing, if not done in the name and strength of Christ. The house was destroyed if the door posts were not sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb; if thou couldest wear out thy tongue in prayer, and make thy knees as hard as a camel's hoofs with kneeling; if thou wouldest expend all thy moisture with weeping for sin, and fast till skin and bones cleave together as an anatomy; couldst thou keep all thy vows, reform thy heart and life, and be as holy as an angel, and bear the torments of hell with the devils, all this would not make God amends for the least sin, nor quench one spark of God's flaming wrath; no, Christ alone must bring you off with the holy and righteous God; "He is the propitiation

* Rom. x. 3.

for our sins; by his stripes we are healed; by his blood we are reconciled; through his intercession we are admitted into the holy of holies."*

If you rest upon grace inherent, and think to climb to heaven that way, you set up Acesius's ladder, and if you could mount so high upon that, you might then say, this is heaven which I have built, this is the glory which my grace hath purchased; thus the God of heaven must, as one saith, become tenant to his creature in heaven. Then you might say as that proud person did, whose language was, "I will not have heaven at free cost;"† I will pay for my mansion or I will never come there; and such a one shall never come thither. Indeed, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, and that through Jesus Christ our Lord."‡ God hath now cast the order of our salvation into another mold and method, a method of grace, not of grace in us, or by us, but of grace to us, and for us. Inherent grace hath its place and office, that is to accompany salvation, not to procure it;‖ Christ only is the author of salvation;§ the whole stress must be laid on him or you fall. God gives a strict charge that men bring all their sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; if any neglect this, the text saith, "blood shall be imputed to that man, and he shall be cut off from among his people."¶ Christ is the door, and as none can go to heaven but through him, who is the way, truth, and life, so God will accept no sacrifices but through Christ;** if any presume to bring them upon their own account, he shall be esteemed to be as a murderer, both by God and

* 1 John ii. 2. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Col. i. 20. Heb. x. 19, 22.
† Cœlum gratis non accipiam. ‡ Rom. vi. 23.
‖ Heb. vi. 9. § Heb. v. 9. ¶ Lev. xvii. 4.
** John x. xiv. 6.

man, for he is as if he killed a man, that comes not in God's instituted way.* O sirs, be sure you look to this, that your persons and performances be presented through Christ; "Lay both your hands on the head of the live goat, confess over him all your iniquities,—and by faith put all your transgressions and all your sins upon the head of the goat, to be carried into the wilderness."† The Jews write that this goat was carried to the mountain Azazel, therefore the goat is so called, ver. 10, and that there he was cast down headlong, and that the red string by which he was led turned white, when God was pleased with the Israelites, otherwise it remained red, and then they mourned all that year; and the ancient Hebrews write that forty years before the destruction of the temple, which was about the time of Christ's death, this red string turned no more white.‡ Though the Jews be rejected, and wrath is come upon them to the uttermost for their wilful murder of Christ and their unbelief, yet this scarlet line of the blood of Jesus will be a token to secure Jew or Gentile who is interested in it by faith, and renounceth his own righteousness. O that you and I could look upon this scarlet hung up in the window of the gospel, as the means and pledge of our deliverance.‖ But by no means depend on your own righteousness, it will prove a rotten branch and deceive you. You will say, what needs all this? will you make us pharisees, self-justiciaries? where is the man that trusts in his grace or goodness? Alas, I may say, where is the Christian that doth fully stand clear? Do we not all lean towards the old house, and resemble the old stock? Sanctifying grace doth but cure us in part of this as well as other sins. He is a rare pilot

* Isa. lxvi. 3. † Lev. xvi. 21.

‡ Mr. Pool's Engl. Annot. on the place. ‖ Josh. ii. 21.

indeed, that can steer his faith in so direct a course, as not now and then to strike upon this duty, and run aground upon that grace. The spiritual children of Abraham may be found too often cleaving to their own righteousness, especially when they are taken with the glory and splendour of it. According to the various aspects of our obedience, so oft times is the ebbing and flowing of our faith, if there be a spring tide of our enlargement, it covers the mountains of our fears; if there be a wane, presently our faith flies back, and we have no hopes of acceptance. Ah sirs, how poor is this life of spiritual sense! learn this high lesson a little better, practically to improve Jesus Christ as mediator of this covenant, for access to God, and acceptance with him.

CHAP. XV.

SOURCES OF CONSOLATION SUGGESTED, AND A SOLUTION OF DOUBTS PROPOSED.

I HAVE yet something to add for the encouragement of such as are entered into covenant with the Lord, which I shall place under the two following divisions: *Cordials for their support,* and *answers to their doubtings.*

In the first place, I shall briefly advert to the cordials, or sources of consolation to which God's children may have recourse.

1. Thou mayest, Christian, be truly entitled a saint; so saith the text, "gather my saints together," those are they that have made a covenant with him by sacri-

fice. See here, covenanting souls are sanctified souls. It is true, that in this ridiculing age the word *saint* is grown a matter of such scorn with us, as the word *reformed* is with the Roman Catholics; yet we have no reason to decline or be ashamed of scripture language; we may call those saints whom God is pleased to stile by that appellation. You will say, but who are saints, many arrogate that title to themselves and their party, that are a pack of arrant hypocrites? I answer,

(1.) The truest saints are most humble, and humble persons are most conscious to themselves of their own sinfulness, and therefore are most cautious in assuming this title.

(2.) They that assume this title most confidently to themselves, or monopolize all saintship to their own party, are most to be suspected, for it is equivalent to God's children, believers, Christians, faithful, or God's servants, which are not to be restrained to one sect or sort of Christians, but have a catholic import, including all that profess the true faith, and live accordingly. So saith the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 2, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." We may in the judgment of charity call them saints, that call upon the name of the same Lord, though they differ from us in many things, yet holding the essentials of religion, in doctrine, worship, and practice. You will say, are not all sinners, who then can be saints? I answer, all are sinners, but all are not alike sinners.

[i.] Some are in the state of sin, under the power of it.

[ii.] Some are regenerated, in whom sin is subdued as to its dominion, "these are not under the law, but

under grace,"* and God is pleased to denominate them from the better part, though much is amiss in them; we speak of a corn field, though there be weeds, straw, and chaff. "Aaron was a saint of the Lord,"† though he had much imperfection. Converts are puritans, though they have much impurity;‡ holy brethren, though not all holy. Be comforted in this, God owns his jewels, though they be in this polluted world, and much sullied, yet he will not despise them, but gather them up to himself at last.‖

2. Thou hast a title to all the promises in the bible; all the good things in earth and heaven are thine. "All the promises in Christ are yea and amen."§ He that hath right to the tree, hath right to all the fruits growing on that tree; "he that overcometh shall inherit all things; godliness hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come; all things are yours;"¶ good things are for your comfort, evil things for your profit; all shall prove either food or physic. God's glorious attributes shall be employed for you; Christ's purchases shall be conferred on you. It is hard to make a catalogue of the saint's inventory; it is worth more than heaven and earth amount to. If you be the Lord's he will save you;** nature teacheth every thing to take care of its own. You cannot foresee what dangers and difficulties you are daily exposed to, "but the Lord is thy keeper on thy right hand; he that keepeth Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps;"†† thou mayest safely commit thyself into his hands in doing and suffering, "for he is thy faithful Creator:"‡‡ thou mayest use this as the lock of the night and key

* Rom. vi. 14. † Psalm cvi. 16. ‡ 1 John iii. 3.
‖ Heb. iii. 1. Mal. iii. 17. § 2 Cor. i. 20.
¶ Rev. xxi. 7. 1 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Cor. iii. 21.
** Psalm cxix. 94. †† Psalm cxxi. 3—5. ‡‡ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

of the morning; open and shut thy eyes with this cordial, God is mine and I am his; "now thou mayest lie down and not be afraid, thy sleep shall be sweet; for the Lord shall be thy confidence."* "The poor committeth himself to thee,† thou art the helper of the fatherless," Psal. x. 14; and it is one thing to have a mercy from God in a common, another in a covenant way. O what a blessed relish doth covenant kindness put into a mercy! This is a complicated mercy that hath many in the bowels of it; thou mayest rejoice in the mercies of thy God, but especially in the God of thy mercies amidst the sharpest dispensations.‡

3. This covenant relation shall never be dissolved. What thou hast been doing to day, shall stand for ever; it is a covenant of salt, "an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten; mountains may depart, and hills be removed—but this covenant of peace shall not be removed; God will not leave you, nor forsake you;" and he takes care and orders "that you shall not forsake him."‖ Is this worth nothing in this uncertain world? You may lose estates, credit, houses, relations, spiritual comforts, necessary supplies, but shall never lose your God; this is worth something in a suffering day. God is faithful and omnipotent; "no man can pluck you out of his hands;" God the Son will not lose such as are given him, "he saves to the utmost," and ever lives to make intercession for you.§ God the Holy Ghost "shall be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."¶ Covenant grace sets the soul's "feet in an even place; and he that walketh uprightly walketh surely,"** he treads strong on the

* Prov. iii. 24—26. Ezek. xxxiv. 25.

† *Heb.* leaveth himself with thee. ‡ Deut. xxvi. 11. Hab. iii. 16—18.

‖ Jer. l. 5. Isa. liv. 9, 10. Heb. xiii. 5. Jer. xxxii. 40.

§ John x. 28. John xvii. 12. Heb. vii. 25. ¶ John iv. 14.

** Psalm xxvi. 12. Prov. x. 9.

ground, like one whose feet are sound; though sharp stones lie in his way, he goes over them safely; nothing turns him back, "for the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath him are everlasting arms;" and God is able to "keep him from falling, and to present him blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."* O the happiness of a covenanted soul; when he is called out to more than ordinary service or suffering, God gives more than ordinary supplies, both of strength to bear troubles and of consolation; "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;"† he hath some auxiliaries that another hath not, and shall be brought safe to land whatever shipwrecks he may suffer.

4. This personal covenant now contracted, will render death welcome, and will bring thee safe to heaven. That death which dissolves all other bonds, confirms this; death is a stingless serpent, it cannot hurt you; and though it be an enemy to nature, in breaking the nerves, or ligaments of soul and body, yet it is a friend to grace, perfecting that and joining it fully to its present source. Death is a dark valley, that makes the stoutest champions tremble when they enter it, yet David could say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."‡ Direction and protection are worth something through that strange passage which you never went before, and which leads you into an endless state. O what trembling qualms have come upon poor sinners' spirits when they have entered these straits. A mighty emperor dying, cried out, "O my poor wandering, self-flattering soul,

* Deut. xxxiii. 27. Jude, 24. † Psalm xxxvii. 24.
‡ Psalm xxiii. 4.

whither art thou now going? thou must now no more jest and sport, or enjoy thy sensual pleasures."* What a poor shift have some of them made to keep off the fears of death, by charging all about them not to mention it. Little advantage could it be to Herod the Great's putrefying body or lost soul, to have such a pompous funeral. His body was carried in a procession, from his palace at Jericho to the castle Herodion, going but each day eight furlongs, in a golden litter, set with precious stones, bearing cloth of purple, the body clothed with purple, a diadem on his head, over it a crown of gold, and a sceptre in his right hand,† &c. Alas, what is all this to the precious soul? William the Conqueror took more care of that in his blind age of devotion, for when he was dying, hearing the great bell ring prime to the virgin Mary, lifting up his hands, he said, I commend myself to that blessed lady Mary, mother of God, that she by her holy prayers may reconcile me to her most dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and with these words yielded up the ghost.‡ But I hope you have otherwise learned Christ, "and being reconciled to God by the death of his Son," you may now confidently say at death, "into thy hand I commend my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."‖ Certainly living and dying in the arms of our Lord, in the sense of covenant relation is the sweetest death; this was all David's salvation in his last and most earnest breathings of his soul, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Among the dying speeches of that holy man of God, Mr. Samuel Fairclough, these are observable, "Be careful to redeem time, get evidences of heaven betimes, for times of sickness and old age are times

* Animula vagula, blandula quæ nunc abibis in loca?

† Usher's Annals, A. M. 401, fol. 725.

‡ Speed's Hist. pag. 434. ‖ Rom. v. 10. Psalm xxxi. 5.

of considering, not of gaining such evidences, this work of preparing for eternity is only to be done by entering into covenant with God, and making peace through Christ, which if once sincerely done, neither sick bed nor death bed can do you the least hurt."* O, of what worth is a covenant God at all times, especially in a dying hour! when dying groans are regarded by a reconciled God, how safe is the soul? and if that be safe all is safe. The covenant is a precious cordial to fainting saints in life, and a viand to a dying saint; and after death it will guide him into the presence of the great King. "Gather my saints together to me," saith God in my text; they shall be gathered to their fathers by death, they shall sleep in Jesus till the resurrection, and then he will send his "angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," † and being gathered before him, he will say to those "on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;"‡ not one saint shall be missing though never so obscure, not a member of his body wanting, nor a particle of their dust, "but the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with these words." ||

Yes, saith the doubting soul, there is comfort enough for those that are savingly in covenant; and were I sure of this, I should be satisfied; but here lies my suspicion. This leads me to the

Second Branch of encouragement to covenanted

* Mr. Clark's Lives.

† Matt. xxiv. 31. ‡ Matt. xxv. 31, 34. || 1 Thess. iv. 16—18.

souls, which is a solution of doubts, which are raised by pious souls in this case.

1. There may be doubt concerning the measure of knowledge necessary to form a covenant engagement, and needful afterwards for performing the terms thereof. The ground of the doubt is this: the Christian hears he must enter this covenant with understanding and judgment; but alas, saith the soul, I find myself very ignorant, and unapprehensive of divine things, I am sure I am under many mistakes: how may I know that I have that knowledge which is essential to a due covenanting with God?

I answer, you must ascertain the difference between a knowledge *objectively considered*, relating to the things known, and *subjectively*, which refers to the manner of knowing them.

(1.) As to the objects, or things to be known, of which, as the essentials of religion are few, a hypocrite's knowledge may be as extensive and comprehensive as a child of God's; however, I hope you understand in what state God made man, and how he fell; you know something of man's woful state by the fall, which hath cast you under God's wrath and curse, according to the broken covenant of works, and that there is no relief or remedy within the compass of the whole creation, Jesus Christ being the only Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. You know something of Christ's conception, nativity, life, his natures—as God and man; his offices, as Mediator, prophet, priest, and king; his death and sufferings, his resurrection, his ascension, session at God's right hand, intercession, and coming to judgment. You know on what terms he calls you to embrace his religion, namely, to forsake all, return to God by sincere repentance, lay hold on Christ by sincere faith, and resolve to be obedient to

his blessed will: and you understand something of the privileges of those who are in covenant with God, such as pardon of all your sins, reconciliation with God, adoption to be his children, communion with God, hearing your prayers, interest in the promises, and eternal salvation. You know *something* of these, no mortal knows them adequately; you will still be defective, for a finite capacity cannot have an infinite apprehension of an infinite being:* "These are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?" Job xxvi. 14: you will still be learning the things of God.

(2.) You must rather study the nature, properties, and effects of your knowledge; consider deliberately, whether it be distinct, sensible, appreciative, experimental, what influence it has upon your souls. The illumination of the sanctified Spirit discovers spiritual truths powerfully, convincingly, efficaciously, bringing the soul into obedience thereto; this is to know the truth as it is in Jesus, when the heart is warmed with "the love of the truth;" † and as the sun hath a prolific and quickening virtue, to beget life, so divine truths come with authority, awing conscience, and with efficacy producing faith, love, and cheerful obedience. Art thou really ashamed of thine own ignorance, and like David and Agur, call thyself a fool and brutish?‡ Art thou faithful to the knowledge thou hast, in following the light and acting accordingly?‖ Dost thou ply the throne of grace for more? Prayer puts thee under God's tuition; God gives wisdom to all that ask,

* Apprehendimus infinitum sub ratione infiniti, sed non infinitè.—*Weems's Portr.* pag. 90. Omne receptum est in recipiente, non per modum recepti, sed per modum recipientis.

† Eph. iv. 21. 2 Thess. ii. 10.

‡ Psalm lxxiii. 22. Prov. xxx. 2, 3. ‖ John vii. 17.

[ἁπλῶς] graciously or liberally,* not like a proud man, who will rather put a person who is weak to shame, for his ignorance, than take pains to teach him; and though all be not Solomons in knowledge, yet such as submit to the orders of God's school, shall be so furnished with saving knowledge as to fit them for admittance into heaven's college. God engages in this new covenant, that "all shall know him from the least to the greatest, that they shall be all taught of God."† Hast thou learned this lesson "of the Father, to come to Christ?"‡ This is the great gospel lesson. Dost thou experimentally feel the evil of sin? Art thou sick at heart? longing for the Physician, and cordially submitting to his prescriptions? And though thou know something of him, yet art thou making this thy aim, still to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death?"‖ Dost thou then lament thy ignorance, dig for knowledge, set open thy windows for further light, use God's means humbly, and for right ends? Thou mayest be in covenant with God.

2. There may be doubt concerning degrees of humiliation. I hear, say you, that a true covenanter humbles himself for former sins, and with a due sense of heart-vileness; but in this I am exceedingly defective, I have been a great sinner, and ought to humble myself greatly, as Manasseh did,§ but I am afraid I have not yet attained to an ordinary degree of humiliation.

Ans. (1.) Dream not of such humiliation as will bear proportion to thy sins; that is a legal conceit once to imagine it, and it is impossible to attain it. Sin is an infinite evil, as to the object against whom it

* James i. 5. † Jer. xxxi. 34. Isa. liv. 13.
‡ John vi. 45. ‖ Phil. iii. 10. § 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.

is committed; you may satisfy yourselves with your own tears, but can never run a parallel of sorrow to sin. God delights not in legal terrors, affrighting horror, and sinking despair, any further than to make sin bitter and Christ sweet, and to empty the soul of itself; other imaginary ends will set up your own righteousness, and ruin you. Hath God come with a secret key and opened thy heart as he did Lydia's, rather than broken the wards with terrible blows, as he did in Paul's case? thank him for it, himself knows a reason for this gentle procedure; the wise God sees that all persons are not of equal constitution. Thou hast no reason to complain of the Physician, that he useth not a strong medicine, when gentler means effect the end. Thank God that thy will is bowed by a gentler touch of grace, and not by strong hammerings of legal fears and a spirit of bondage. God may not be in the "great and strong wind, that rends mountains, and breaks rocks, nor in the earthquake, nor fire, but in a still small voice." *

(2.) Thou must study rather the quality than the quantity of thy humiliation, the truth than the bulk of it, the sincerity than the degree of thy sorrow. You will say, how must that be known? I answer, by the evangelicalness of it. Doth it proceed from a gospel spring? Is it practised upon the view of a gospel object, aiming at a gospel rule? Doth the view of a crucified Saviour melt down thy heart into tears of evangelical grief?† Is thy heart changed from a heart of stone to become a heart of flesh?‡ Dost thou affectingly weep over all thy sins? Do gospel sins and secret sins break thy heart? Dost thou lament sin as sin, as offensive to God, turning from him, and grieving him? Hath the Spirit convinced thee of the great sin

* 1 Kings xix. 11—13. † Zech. xii. 10. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

of unbelief?* Hath God stopped thy mouth in self-vindication, and opened it in self-accusation and earnest supplication? Doth the sense of divine love attract thy heart to him? Dost thou really think thy heart is worse than any person's, and that thou art "the chief of sinners?"† Art thou ashamed thou hast stood out so long, and now layest down thy weapons? Art thou now brought to a submissive disposition, and judgest "his yoke to be easy and his burden light,"‡ and thankfully takest it upon thy neck? Dost thou still complain of the burden of corruption, "as a wretched man?"‖ And dost thou come with tears to the Saviour, saying, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief:"§ I am still an unprofitable servant? Woe is me that I can love my Lord no more, and serve him no better! But though I be thus low, as low as sin can make me in this world, I will lie at God's feet: God forbid I should run away from him, or venture upon sin. I am content to be as low as God would have me, that he may attain his purposes with me: yet I will remain at the pool till the waters be troubled, who knows but I may feel the influences of divine grace? If thou canst truly say thus, my soul for thine thou art in covenant with the Lord, for thou art poor in spirit.

3. Doubt may be raised from the treachery of a perfidious heart. And thus the Christian argues: Scripture affirms, (and I find it so by woful experience,) that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? What assurance can I have that it will not deceive me in making and keeping covenant? How is it possible that a false heart should be true to God in keeping covenant? And how should I know it?

* John xvi. 8, 9. † 1 Tim. i. 15. ‡ Matt. xi. 28.
‖ Rom. vii. 24. § Mark ix. 24.

Answ. (1.) It is possible that the heart may be both true and treacherous in different respects: it is treacherous, as the remains of old Adam still lurk and operate in it; it is true, as the grace of sanctification hath renewed God's image in it, "which consists in righteousness and true," that is, not counterfeit, "holiness." * And therefore we are said to "draw near with a true heart;" † for sincerity is that truth that gives denomination to the heart. God accounts that heart true, which is sincere: sincerity and truth are joined oft in scripture phrase.‡ Hypocrisy is a lie, for the inward feeling comports not with the outward profession: just as a clock, whose wheels within go not as the hand points without: or an apple, that hath a fair outside, but is rotten at the core: or a ship, with unseen chinks and leaks. A good clock may be disturbed in its motion, a good apple may have specks and bruises, and a good ship may have sustained some injury and have a few defects; but if the make and constitution of these be right, their accidental blemishes from outward violence is no disparagement to them, but they are removed or cured. David prays, ‖ "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." Upright hearts do keep covenant for the main: "integrity and uprightness do preserve them:" like Gad, "a troop may overcome them, but they shall overcome at last;" § they may be foiled in particular conflicts, as Rome by Carthage, but they shall at last "be more than conquerors through him that loves them." ¶ God hath engaged to make their souls true to him.

(2.) It is possible thou mayest come to know whe-

* Eph. iv. 24. † Heb. x. 22.
‡ Josh. xxiv. 14. 1 Cor. v. 8. ‖ Psalm cxix. 80.
§ Psalm xxv. 21. Gen xlix. 19. ¶ Rom. viii. 37.

ther thy heart be true or treacherous, though difficult. *Who can know it?* speaks not impossibility but difficulty: God hath given rules to know the truth of grace, or power of sin: he gives helps to make a diligent search into these dark dungeons. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."* Even the heathen have a self-clearing, or a self-condemning conscience;† and if men would put this candle into God's lanthorn, or rather light conscience "by the lamp of God's word," ‡ they might find out sin and grace, sincerity and hypocrisy: a faithful search might determine the matter: if you deceive yourselves by thinking yourselves something when you are nothing, the remedy is, "Prove your own work," Gal. vi. 3, 4. "Examine and prove your own selves; know you not,"‖ as if it had been said, you may know whether Christ be in you or not. What sayest thou, reader, dost thou bring thy heart to the touchstone of God's word? Dost thou faithfully lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, not hiding any thing from thine eyes, good or bad? Darest thou humbly put the Lord upon a narrow search of thy heart and thoughts?§ Wouldst thou "be weighed in an even balance," and appeal to the heart-searching God, even in thy last breathings, both as to conscience and conversation, as Hezekiah and Paul did?¶ Poor soul, canst thou not truly say, Lord, here I am, I set myself in thy presence; none knows but God and my conscience? I am this day opening a casement into the interior of my soul: I have found much treachery in my heart, and am very jealous I shall play fast and loose with thy sacred Ma-

* Prov. xx. 27. † Rom. ii. 15. ‡ Psal. cxix. 105.
‖ 2 Cor. xiii. 5. § Psal. xxvi. 2. cxxxix. 23.
¶ Job xxxi. 6. Isa. xxxviii. 3. 2 Cor. i. 12.

jesty in this weighty affair of covenanting. But O my dear Lord! I do here set myself as a crystal glass in the shining sun; if there be any approved guile, undiscovered guilt, or secret way of wickedness within me, let me know it; whatever it cost me, pardon it to me, and purge it out of thy covenanting servant: if thou canst truly say thus, "Fear not, thy heart is sincere."

4. Doubt may be raised from the strength of corruption. Alas, saith the covenanting soul, I fear I am not capable of making or keeping covenant, for I cannot get this accursed league between sin and my soul thoroughly broken: when I am for giving up myself in this marriage with God, sin forbids the banns, it holds me back, cuts off my purposes, and separates between God and me; and afterwards it is impetuous and imperious. Alas! is it possible that such outbreakings of corruption, and assaults of temptation, should be consistent with a covenant state?

Answ. (1.) A corruption may be turbulent, when yet it may not be prevalent. The more a lust is checked the more it rageth; as a stream stopped by a dam swells higher, or a madman bound rages more fiercely, or a beast wounded and dying puts forth his last dying struggles; thus doth lust, Rom. vii. 8, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;" that is, occasionally; like some malefactors, when they see they must die, grow desperate and outrageous; and when Satan sees he must part with his hold, he stirs up all his forces, as Pharaoh did against flying Israel. You must not think the devil is asleep when you are awaked, or that he is bound from tempting when you are bound in covenant; no, he is loosed upon you, and grows more furious than ever, and calls up all his party within

you, and because you feel spiritual foes making head against you, therefore you are ready to conclude your lusts are now stronger; whereas the reason is because you discern them better. "When the servant of the man of God was risen early, he saw horses and chariots," light discovered them, "and he cried, alas master, how shall we do? Elisha prayed, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes, that he may see; then he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire."* Observe it, want of light or sight hinders our seeing friends or foes, adversaries or auxiliaries; men that are in a state of darkness and spiritual death, have swarms of lusts sucking the blood of their souls, but see them not till grace opens their eyes. A light coming into a room discovers, (doth not make,) more dust than was visible before. Spiritual light discovers spiritual sins, "for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."†

(2.) Yet the covenanted soul doth not, shall not sin at the rate that others do. It cannot be expected but the believer doth sin; yea, let him bind himself in a thousand bonds against sin, yet that ancient inmate, that accursed inhabitant will be peeping out, and shew itself upon every occasion, but the grace of the covenant is a sovereign antidote against inbred corruption; "My grace, saith he, is sufficient for thee;"‡ not that it changeth the nature of sin, but the state and frame of the sinner. Now he doth not ordinarily break out into scandalous sins as formerly; nay, the stream runs not all one way, he sins not with the full bent of will; there is a contrary bias created in him; now he maintains a warfare against his corruptions, he avoids occasions and appearances of evil, watcheth, warreth, prayeth, and appeals to God, that there is no approved guile or way of sin within him. Thus sin is crucified,

* 2 Kings vi. 15—17. † Eph. v. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

and grace is working it out gradually; in this sense it is said, "He that is born of God sinneth not;"* and this care and conflict evidence integrity, Psalm xviii. 23, "I was also upright before him;" how is that proved? why "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." It is the nature of grace to be working out lust; as the eye works or weeps out the mote got into it; or as the spring clears itself of mud; "He that hath this hope purifieth himself as he also is pure."† Though sin cleave to grace, as dross to silver, yet it mixeth not with it; the fire refines the silver, and burns out the dross; the oil will not mingle with water, but gets above it: thus received grace supplied with assisting grace gets a glorious conquest; "Sin hath not dominion over souls that are under grace."‡ He that is fighting is overcoming; covenanters are conquerors, and shall be triumphers. It is true, the new covenant doth not suddenly drive out corruptions, those devoted Canaanites, only by little and little; but yet it makes them tributaries, to serve the soul's best interest; they are as pricks in their eyes to stir up godly sorrow, and as thorns in their sides to spur them forwards in the road to heaven. It is not the having of impurities that evidenceth hypocrisy, but bearing with them, indulging ourselves in them. A confederacy with sensual appetites shews a polluted heart; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer;"‖ a kind regard for sin may undo you; but the upright Christian hates every way of wickedness, and is still washing and cleansing himself from "all filthines both of flesh and spirit."§ Cleanly persons are still employed to wash out spots. Corruption will not hurt thee if thou hate it; there is no man on earth but finds

* 1 John iii. 9. † 1 John iii. 3. ‡ Rom. vi. 14.
‖ Psal. lxvi. 18. § 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ebullitions of sin, if however you suffer it not to lodge without disturbance, it is no stated inhabitant within you.

5. Doubt may be grounded upon weakness and waywardness, in the work of God and exercises of devotion. O, saith the soul, how can I be within the covenant, who want covenant grace? Doth not God say, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."* But alas, I find not only an inability, but a kind of antipathy to duty; I cannot get my heart thoroughly reconciled to the strict ways of God; I am heartless to good, averse to self-examination, dead or distracted in prayer and in meditation. The better the duty, the more unwilling am I to do it; and is this consistent with a covenant state?

Answ. (1.) The covenant that you are now engaged in, is not a covenant of works, but of grace. Sincerity, not complete legal righteousness, is expected; expect not justification by the works of the law; righteousness comes in at another door; "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," that is, it cannot justify the soul, because the sinner is weak, and cannot fulfil it, "God sending his own Son in the likenesss of sinful flesh, and for sin," that is, by a sacrifice for sin, "condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. There are spots in our holiest feasts, and some blackness on our most beautiful ornaments; our sweetest roses have some prickles, and there is some honeycomb with our purest honey. Yea, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" God may justly "spread dung on our faces, even the dung of our solemn feasts."† Who can come forth and say, this work is faultless? We are short-coming in all; but the perfect robes of

* Ezek. xxxvi. 27. † Song. v. 1. Isa. lxiv. 6. Mal. ii. 3.

a perfect Saviour cover all our defects. No man is free from sin; "But the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" our high priest takes away the "iniquity of our holy things."* When we stand "before the angel of the Lord, we are clothed with filthy garments," but our dear Lord orders our "filthy garments to be taken away, and clothes us with change of raiment."† Who dares to stand before the all-seeing eye of a jealous God with his best suit of inherent righteousness upon him? The best may pray with Hezekiah, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God—though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."‡ Alas, we are very faulty and defective; but it is well thy eye is so clear to discover spots. Thou hast some spiritual light, and this will quicken thy actings of faith for pardon.

(2.) You cannot expect to perform duties without reluctancy; for every christian man forms two parties; "in the Shunamite are two armies; the flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things we would,"‖ nor as we would. A child of God hath a greater propensity to duty than another man, yet he hath something within that dams this current of inward principle; "He hath a law in his members; a body of death, a weight hanging on him, and the sin which doth so easily beset him, that he must run with pains and patience the race set before him."§ A Christian is more on a level for heaven than another, yet he hath many obstacles in his way. Much of the Christian's road is uphill; corruption presses him downwards, as grace lifts him towards heaven; yet

* 1 John i. 7, 8. Exod. xxviii. 38. † Zech. iii. 3, 4.
‡ 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19. ‖ Song vi. 13. Gal. v. 17.
§ Rom. vii. 23, 24. Heb. xii. 1.

the principled soul hath a bias for God, a balance with a cast for the things of God. Grace in the heart works even a connaturalness to duty. What sayest thou? art thou not inclining after God in the worst frame? art thou not like a bird wandering from her nest, a rivulet moving towards the ocean, or a needle trembling till it fix towards the loadstone? canst thou not truly speak this language: Lord, my heart is bad, yet I come to thee to mend it; I dare not, I cannot run from thee; I am dull in duty but cannot cast off duty; I find a grudging at some strict commands, but dare not wish them razed out of the bible; nay, I can say, "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;"* the more it curbs my sinful propensities, and binds me to God, the better I love it; and though lust rage against what restrains it, "yet I delight in the law of God after the inward man;"† though I find a hanging back, yet my spirit makes me willing. There is no command of God, or duty incumbent on me, but methinks I find something in my heart in accordance with it, and if it pull back I will put it forward; if it start aside, I will study to restore it; if it grow weary, I will spur it on, and take some pains with my spirit to get it heavenwards. I find nothing will forward in spiritual things without pains; I know endeavours will not do it without God, yet God without endeavours will not ordinarily effect the work; I will therefore under a sense of my weakness wait on God for assistance; using means as if I were to manage all by my endeavours; and depend on God as if I had used no means at all; "I will run the ways of God's commandments," as if I must obtain the prize by running, "yet so lean on my beloved,"‡ as if I had no legs or feet to run with.

* Ps. cxix. 140 † Rom. vii. 22. ‡ Ps. cxix. 32. Song. viii. 5.

6. Doubt may arise from the different methods of divine grace in bringing the soul into covenant. O, saith the Christian, I have heard that some have such a distinct knowledge of God's operations on their hearts, that they can give an account of time, means, instruments, steps, and every particular circumstance about the workings of God's grace; but I cannot do so, therefore I am doubtful whether I be yet in covenant?

Answ. (1.) God's ways of grace, as well as methods of providence are various, and cannot be traced. God doth not always confine himself to one constant method in bringing souls to himself, and into covenant. Saul is struck down by an immediate hand, when he is running against the pikes, "and kicking against the pricks."* Lydia's heart is sweetly opened with a gentle touch of the Spirit, while she is sitting under an ordinance.† As to time, some are called early in the morning, some at the sixth hour, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh hour.‡ Sometimes God works by the most ordinary means, the preaching of the word, "faith comes by hearing;" sometimes by reading the scriptures, as the eunuch, Acts viii; sometimes by providences, as in Christ's time, some were wrought on by miracles; Waldus, the father of the Waldenses, was convinced by his companion suddenly dropping down dead; Manasseh was awakened by chains; the jailor by Paul's imprisonment, fears of his escape, and an earthquake. A good author tells us of one he knew, that hearing bells ring for the dead, awakened conscience, and stirred up serious thoughts in him;‖ and I knew one that had deep impressions made on his spirit in his younger days, by a ballad concerning the

* Acts ix. 4, 5. † Acts xvi. 14. ‡ Matt. xx. 1—16.
‖ Dr. Colling's discourses of Actual Provid. p. 657—678.

soul and body parting, and meeting again. It is hard to tell when has been the time, or what the means, by which the saving work has been wrought in the heart. And for the manner of God's working; some, saith one, are drawn by a silken thread, others by iron fetters; some are put into the belly of hell and are long under a spirit of bondage; others drop more insensibly into the ways of God, the spirit moving into their souls without any noise; the reasons of all these see, in the words of that reverend divine quoted below. This may be much hid from you, it becomes you not to sit in judgment upon the ways of God; he giveth us not an account of some of his dispensations, some of "his ways are past finding out,"* rather to be admired than postively determined; so saith our Saviour, Mark iv. 26—29, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and should rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how; and it comes gradually, there is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Look to the truth of grace, though you cannot find the head of this Nile.

(2.) Yet for the main God walks in a beaten road, and makes gradual movements towards the souls of such as he takes into covenant with himself; the work is conversion of the sinner to himself, this is so absolutely necessary, that our Saviour peremptorily asserts it with, "*Verily I say unto you*, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;"† and this must be scriptural conversion, and so a covenant engagement. Time and room would fail me to give you the characters or the gradual operations of divine grace herein; only I shall question you, in these few things:

* Rom. xi. 33. † Matt. xviii. 3.

Hath free grace put a stop to thy soul in thy sinful career, "by making a wall or a hedge of thorns?"* Hast thou not stood still, and considered what thou art by nature, whither thou art going in the course of a sinful life? Dost thou not see thy utter inability to help thyself, that thou art without strength? Is not the creature insufficient as a portion for thy soul; mountains and hills being vain, if God do not help? Is not thy mouth stopped, without any thing or object, why sentence should not be passed and executed upon thee?† Are thy eyes opened to see the necessity of Christ, and excellency of a covenant state, the beauty of holiness, and the felicity of gracious souls? Hast thou inquired after, and willingly submitted to covenant terms?‡ Hast thou ingenuously confessed all thy sins, and ransacked thy heart and life to find out all thy iniquities, and lay them open in their aggravating circumstances? Hast thou made it thy business to inquire what thou must do to be saved, and been solicitous chiefly for thy immortal soul?‖ Hast thou cast thy poor soul, (being affrighted with the threats of the law, and accusations of conscience,) wholly upon Christ as held out in some promise? Dost thou tremble under the thoughts of the guilt of sin,§ and hate the garment spotted by the flesh? Dost thou daily get ground on thy corruption and increase in grace and holiness? Dost thou hearken to the suggestions, and improve the operations of the Holy Spirit, to guide and assist thee?¶ Dost thou make it thy business to walk with God in

* Luke xv. 17. Hosea ii. 4.
† Rom. v. 6. Jer. iii. 23. Rom. iii. 19. Psalm li. 4.
‡ Matt. ix. 12. Psalm xxxii. 1. Acts xi. 23.
‖ Jer. xxxi. 18. Dan. ix. 5. Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30.
§ Luke xiii. 12. Acts xvi. 31. Isa. lxvi. 2.
¶ Jude, 23. Mal. iv. 2. Gal. v. 16, 18.

thy general and particular calling?* "Dost thou keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and man?"† at least is this thy daily exercise? And dost thou deny thyself, thy natural, civil, religious self, "that God in Christ may be all in all?"‡ These and such like are evidences of genuine religion, and the methods of grace when God carries on spiritual operations in the hearts of poor sinners. Lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and though you cannot say, at such a juncture of time, or in such a precise manner I was brought in, yet you may say as the poor blind man, John ix. 25, "One thing I know (though I be ignorant in many other things,) that whereas I was blind now I see;" I find a change in my heart and life, I was hard, heartless, dead and carnal, but now I find it otherwise in my soul.

7. The last doubt is occasioned by darkness, guilt, and challenges from God and conscience. Oh, saith the soul, I cannot be persuaded that I am under covenant, for God frowns upon me, conscience flies in my face, I am under sad misgivings of spirit, I have no assurance of my title, nay, I have great reason to fear the contrary, I doubt, I doubt there was never any such covenant between God and my soul.

Answ. (1.) It is not essential to the soul's being in covenant, to know that it is in covenant; God never made this a condition of the covenant. A direct act of faith going out to Christ to embrace him is one thing, a reflex act of the soul to know the truth of faith is another; the former is needful to our safety, the latter to our comfort. Sometimes God thinks fit to frown on, chide with, yea, scourge his children, when his heart is set on them in covenant love; yea, he hath

* Gen. v. 22. † 1 Cor. vii. 24. Acts xxiv. 16.
‡ Matt. xvi. 24. Col. iii. 11.

adopted the rod into the covenant, he promiseth to give his children due correction; yea, they shall even own this his carriage as an act of great faithfulness; * and this also is one branch of their affliction, that he hides his face from the house of Israel, though he still be their Saviour. † Was David no covenanted soul, when God did hide his face, and he was troubled? and when he questioned God's love and faithfulness? doth he not own it as his infirmity? ‡ May not a child of light walk in darkness? || Must God always dandle you on his knee? and give you the kisses of his mouth? Have you not provoked him? Though he loves you, he thinks not fit you shall always enjoy the sense of that love; he knows better what is for your good, than you do yourselves. You must know that paternal anger is consistent with peculiar love: Are you better than Job and Heman who lay under heavy rebukes? Satan will be raging, guilt rising, and conscience accusing the most upright souls; yea, God may think fit at the same time, to contend, chasten, and shew his anger, yet all this in love and with design to comfort: see Isa. lvii. 15—19.

(2.) Dost thou still keep thy hold of God by his promises, and cry after an angry God, and follow him in duty? this is a good evidence of possessing covenant grace. "Though he kill me," saith Job, "yet will I trust in him." § The woman in the gospel, that ran and cried after Jesus when he gave no answer, yea a rebuke, calling her a dog, had not only true faith, but great faith. ¶ O blessed soul! that dares follow God in the dark, and trust him when he seems to cast off! Canst thou cling the closer to God when it seems

* Psalm lxxxix. 32. cxix. 71.
† Isa. xlv. 15.
‡ Psalm xxx. 7. lxxvii. 10
|| Isa. l. 10.
§ Job xiii. 15.
¶ Matt. xv. 27.

that he would hastily withdraw himself, as if he would not be spoken to? This is a good sign of grace, much grace, covenant grace. Is not this the language of thy heart? in such a time, and in such a place I entered into a covenant with the Lord, he assisted my heart, I do not repent that agreement, it was the best match that ever I made, and though now for my sins God doth righteously hide his face, and I cannot feel the comforts of my covenant relation, yet I will follow him still; though he flee from me, "it is good for me to draw nigh unto God;"* if he seem to cast off my soul, I will not abandon his ways; the Lord will not cast off for ever, but though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion; though sorrow endure for a night, yet joy will come in the morning. † Let the Lord act as he sees good in his infinite wisdom and sovereignty, I will not dispute his ways, but walk in my way which he hath lined out for me, though storms of satanical temptations, law-challenges, yea, sad earthquakes within, and rebukes from God seem to undermine the house of my profession, yet I will (at what time I am afraid) trust in God, I am sure he can do me no wrong, and believe he will do me no hurt; as long as I am out of hell, if the Lord will give me a heart to adhere to him, I will bless him, let him deal with me as he pleaseth, I am sure he is a "God of judgment, blessed are they that wait for him." ‡ I will use God's appointed means, and give "diligence to make my calling and election sure;" || but if God see good to deny me the blessing of assurance, I will attend him still, he is not bound to my times or arrangements: it is after that persons believe, (how long after, who can tell?) that they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. §

* Psalm lxxiii. 28. † Lam. iii. 31. Psalm xxx. 5.
‡ Isa. xxx. 18. || 2 Pet. i. 10. § Eph. i. 13.

God is a free agent; "I will wait on him who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him:"* I will bless him while I live for all that kindness I have had from him, and if he should cast me into hell, yet might I then be in a capacity to praise and enjoy him, it would be some ease to me; however, in the strength of that good word I will go after him, Hos. vi. 3, "Then shall we know, (that is, we shall feel more of God, know him to satisfaction, be assured of covenant relation) if we follow on to know the Lord, (that is, if we keep close to God in holy duty) his going forth is prepared as the morning, (that is, he will in due time come with the light of joy and consolation, after a dark night of sorrow) and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," to produce fruitfulness: this is the mercy I pray and faint for. But concerning the nature and symptoms of a Christian's doubtings, I refer you to Mr. Gurnal's Christian Armour, part 2, pp. 582—589.

Thus I have at last completed this extensive subject, and indeed it has become much larger than I designed at first, but upon a review I find that it cannot be curtailed; nor any thing material be left out without maiming it. I had also thought to have added further, 1. As a supplement, a short epitome or compendium of the aforesaid extended discussion for the help of the weak; 2. A triumphant extacy of the assured believer, under a due sense of his happy state. But others have done something in both these ways; such an addition also would swell this treatise to too great a bulk, and therefore I shall remove my hand from this table.

* Isa. viii. 17.

A POSTSCRIPT.

INTRODUCTION—ACCEPTANCE OF GOD—DEDICATION TO HIM OF—SOUL—BODY—CONNECTIONS—AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

I AM sensible, that much of my labour will be lost, unless some persons, (for whose sake chiefly I have composed this Treatise,) be directed more plainly, and in fewer words to subscribe the covenant before described; therefore I shall upon a review of the whole, extract the sum and substance of the covenant, detailed in the eighth and ninth chapters, and leaving out the scripture proofs, present it in one view, as a short scheme and compendium of the former, and when you have read the whole book, and are convinced of the reasonableness of the proceeding, and importance of this design as warranted by the word of God, you may adopt the following form. Whether you read it only, or subscribe to it, let your hearts go along with the words, or the sense of them.

O eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, and glorious Lord God, I thy poor creature, that am fallen from thee by Adam's apostacy, and condemned by thy righteous law, for breaking the first covenant made with man in innocency; yet understanding by thy word the willingness of a gracious God, to enter into a covenant of reconciliation with fallen mankind, through Jesus Christ the mediator, I, even I, a poor miserable sinner, at thy footstool this day: being convinced of my miserable state by nature, the necessity I have of thee, and the equity of the terms of this gospel covenant, do here prostrate myself before thee, desiring in the singleness and sincerity of my heart, solemnly and

expressly to subscribe to the articles propounded in thy word, as the terms upon which thou receivest a poor sinner, without any let, reserve, or evasion. The affair is great, my strength small, my heart slippery, but in the name and strength of the Lord Jesus, I here set about it; Lord, assist and accept of me through the mediator of the new covenant.

First, I humbly desire to accept of God the Father, as my only happiness, in knowledge and enjoyment of whom consists my felicity; thou only art the rest and refuge, the suitable and satisfying portion of my immortal soul; thou art my utmost and ultimate end, I am resolved to look no where else for happiness, and to design nothing else but thy glory, as my highest end in all my actings, natural, civil, and religious; and O that my soul might glorify and enjoy thee, as God, and my God. And because God in himself absolutely considered, is a consuming fire to guilty sinners, and there is no approaching to thee but through a mediator, and thou hast sent thy well beloved Son, God equal with the Father, to take upon him human nature, and by his active and passive obedience to bring poor souls unto God. I am abundantly satisfied with this blessed contrivance of free grace, and humbly desire to take thee, gracious Saviour, as my high priest, to expiate for my sins, and by thy blood to reconcile me to God. Angels, men, duties, graces, are not a sufficient price to make compensation for the guilt of one sin, but I trust in the merits of Christ's death, and satisfaction only, for the pardon of all my transgressions. I humbly present my person and prayers to God in the name of Christ my advocate, who intercedes for poor souls at the right hand of God, answering the demands of justice, law, Satan, and conscience, and rendering our sincere but defective performances ac-

ceptable unto God. I take Christ Jesus as the only prophet of his church, who revealed God's mind to mortal creatures, personally by his public ministry on earth, and by his Spirit, and the scriptures and ministers, since his ascension to heaven. I am sure he is infallible, and as long as I follow his guidance I shall not err; I will not follow men any further than they follow Christ. The Lord Jesus I own as king of his church, my sovereign Lord, humbly resolving to submit to thy goverment; conquer my stubborn will, subdue my lusts, and rule my heart and life by thy righteous laws and glorious sceptre. I humbly own and willingly embrace the Holy Spirit, that proceeds from Father and Son, yielding myself to his convictions, influence, and sanctifying operations, depending on his assistance, hoping for his quickening, sealing, and comforting impressions, resolving to be led by the Holy Spirit as long as I live.

I do also humbly embrace, and heartily subscribe to all the truths revealed by God in the scriptures, and being satisfied that they were dictated by the infallible God, I do venture my soul and eternal state thereupon, being assured that the God of truth cannot lie, though many things be above my reach or reason. I do also fully consent and subscribe to the equity of all God's laws and holy commandments, though contrary to my carnal interest, though difficult and hard to be obeyed, though hazardous and drawing on trouble and persecution, and will by the assistance of God's grace, address myself to comply with the most flesh-displeasing and self-denying duties prescribed in the word. Lord, give me an obedient heart; and whatever ordinances thou hast prescribed I will own; I will frequent the assemblies and societies of thy saints, hear thy word, honour and improve the seals of thy covenant, baptism, and

the Lord's supper, and offer up unto thee the daily sacrifices of prayer and praise, and in all, my soul will press after communion with thyself, and edification to mine own soul. Furthermore, I do purpose by thy grace to submit myself to all thy dispensations, cross as well as comfortable. I will not choose my condition in the world, but leave God to choose for me, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, riches or poverty, liberty or imprisonment, honour or shame, I proclaim liberty to thee, to use me as thou pleasest, so thou wilt honour thyself, sanctify all to my good, and save my soul; afflictions from Christ I will bear patiently, tribulations for Christ I will bear triumphantly, if thou wilt give me strength from above; I will be ordered by thee.

And as I will accept of thee, O Lord, and all that thou proposest to me, so I will dedicate myself to thee, soul and body, and all I am and have.

My soul shall be thine to be reformed, purified, and conformed to thine image, from which by sin it is sadly degenerated. My soul shall attend upon thee, for commission from thee, for subjection to thee, for assistance of thy grace; my poor soul shall tremble, and never be at rest till it centre in thee, and have communion with thee; I will daily put my soul into thy hands, in well doing, and will commend my expiring soul to thee at death, hoping thou wilt receive me. Thou hast endowed my noble soul with useful faculties, which I desire to devote to thee, and employ for thee; my mind and understanding is best employed in conceiving of thee, thinking on thee, fixing upon thee; O that I could meditate on God, and spiritual objects day and night! My conscience shall act for thee, and I resolve to yield to its dictates, and maintain its tenderness, and subject it only to thy authority. I will

clear my memory of vain trifles, and replenish it with divine truths, I will remember my sins to be humbled, thy mercies to be thankful, my duty to practise it. My will shall choose thee and thy ways, cleave to thee with purpose of heart, and O that it were kindly melted into thy will! I will love thee, O Lord my Saviour, desire after thee, delight in thee, I will fear and stand in awe of thy glorious Majesty; thou shalt be my hope and confidence; I will hate all sin, as offensive to my God; my soul shall rise up in indignation against sinners, and chiefly abhor myself for mine own iniquities.

God forbid that I should rob God of my body, I will employ it for thee, and devote all my members to thee as instruments of righteousness unto holiness, I will breathe out my soul to God in prayer and praise, my tongue which is my glory, shall not utter vanity, but speak to God's glory, and others' edification. I will restrain my appetite, that I may be temperate in all things. I will make a covenant with mine eyes, that they may not be windows to let in vanity, but inlets of light and heavenly objects which may affect my heart. I will hear God's word and incline mine ear to such discourses, as may edify my soul. My hands I will wash and compass thine altar, and keep them from striking, stealing, or taking bribes; O that they might act for God! I will bow my knees daily to God in prayer, my feet shall carry me to God's ordinances, and religious societies; never to theatres or spectacles of sin and vanity. And as I would be the Lord's, so all mine shall be his, so far as my power extends. Lord, I here dedicate to thee my wife, children, servants, brethren and sisters in the flesh, and all my connections; I will use all endeavours, in my place to bring all to thee, with whom I have to do, by my

prayers, example, instructions, admonitions, or procuring godly ministers to preach to them, that by any means they may be won over to thee, and though I love my relations dearly, yet rather than sin against, or forsake thee, I will freely forego them.

That property in the world which thou hast given me shall be freely at thy disposal, to part with for thy sake; I will distribute frankly for the good of thy church, and the supply of thy saints' necessities, and the extremities of others. My credit shall vail to thy honour, let my name be trampled on that God may be glorified; if I have any reputation in the world, I will improve it for the advancement of the interest of my dear Lord. I dedicate my house to the worship of God, and entertainment of pious ministers, and serious Christians, and strangers, and shall think it well perfumed when God is therein faithfully served. Yea, as I esteem thee, my God, above all the necessary accommodations of life, so I am willing for thy sake to suffer the loss of all, and will study that great lesson, "in every state therewith to be content;" myself and all that I am, and have, are wholly resigned to thee, to be, do, endure, and be disposed of according to thy pleasure. This covenant I subscribe in the integrity of my heart, hoping for acceptance through the merits and mediation of my dear Lord Jesus, the mediator of this blessed covenant; and though I may fail through the infirmity of the flesh, yet I desire and hope thou wilt cover and cure my unavoidable infirmities, recover me out of my backslidings, and preserve me, and present me blameless before thy tribunal. Amen. My heart again echoes to my hand and tongue. Amen, and Amen.

A

FAMILY ALTAR,

ERECTED TO

THE HONOUR OF THE ETERNAL GOD;

OR, A

SOLEMN ESSAY

TO PROMOTE THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN

Private Houses.

THE

EPISTLE

TO

THE CHRISTIAN READER,

ESPECIALLY TO

Householders professing Religion.

FOR your sakes, dear Friends, I presume again to appear upon the public stage, to be your faithful monitor, to prompt you to your duty, and to promote the work of God in your souls, and the worship of God in your families: and I know not how a minister can employ his time, and studies, and pen better, (next to the conviction and conversion of particular souls) than in pressing upon householders a care of the souls under their charge. This hath a direct tendency to public reformation; religion begins in individuals, and passeth on to relatives, and lesser spheres of relationship make up greater, churches and commonwealths consist of families. There is a general complaint of the decay of the power of godliness, and inundation of profaneness; and not without cause. I know no better remedy than domestic piety: did governors teach their inferiors by counsels and examples; did they severely discountenance and restrain enormities, and zealously promote holiness, and then call on God unitedly and earnestly that he would efficaciously work what they cannot effect; who can tell what a blessed alteration would follow? In vain do you complain of magistrates and ministers, while you that are householders are unfaithful to your trust. You complain that the world is in a bad state, what do you do to mend it? Do not so much com-

plain of others as of yourselves; and complain not so much to man as to God, and plead with him for reformation, second also your prayers with earnest endeavours; sweep before your own doors; act for God within your sphere. As you have more opportunity of familiarity with the inmates of your house, so you have more authority over them, from their dependance on you, to influence them; and if you improve not this talent, you will have a dreadful account to give, especially as their blood will be required at your hands, because their sin will be charged on your neglect. Oh sirs! have you not sin enough of your own, but you must draw upon yourselves the guilt of your whole families? It is you that make bad times, and bring down judgments on the nation. Would you rather see the agonies of your children, and hear them crying amidst infernal torments, than speak a word to them for their instruction, hear them cry under your correction, or supplicate God for their salvation? Oh cruel tigers and barbarous monsters! you may imagine yourselves to be Christians, but I cannot judge that man worthy to be a fit communicant at the Lord's table, that maintains not the worship of God ordinarily in his family; and he deserves admonition and censure for this sin of omission, as well as for scandalous sins of commission, for he bewrays his base hypocrisy in pretending to be a saint abroad, when he is a brute at home: for a right-bred Christian is a universalist, "having respect to all God's commandments:" * such as are righteous before God, "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." † Let these then go amongst the herd of the profane, and fare as they do at the last, that make no conscience of family or relative godliness. Such as will not pray now, will cry too late, "Lord, Lord, open to us," ‡ when the door is shut; yea, they that now will not cry for a crumb of mercy, shall in hell cry out for a "drop of water, to quench their scorched tongues in those eternal torments." ‖ To these self-destroying hypocrites, I recommend the serious consideration of Prov. i. 24—31. Job viii. 13—15. xxvii. 8—10.

I shall address myself to honest, well-meaning householders, who make conscience of serving God with their families. You may look on this as your privilege, as well as duty; I hope

* Psalm cxix. 6. † Luke i. 6. ‡ Matt. xxv. 11, 12. ‖ Luke xvi. 24.

you do. David thought it a great mercy that he and his people had any thing to offer, and any hopes of acceptance. * O what an honour is it, that the King of heaven gives you an admittance into his presence-chamber with your families twice a day! to confess your sins, beg pardon and supplies of mercy; to give him the glory of his goodness, and to lay your load on him, and get ease: I hope you will never be averse to it, or weary of it. God forbid you should: you are not weary of meal times, if you be healthy; know and keep these appointed times of coming to God. If you promise to meet a person of quality at such an hour, when the clock strikes, you rise up, crave pardon, and tell the company one tarries for you, you must be gone. Oh take not more liberty with God than you would do with men; and keep your hearts continually in a frame for duty. Rambling in the day indisposeth your spirits for duty at night. So act, as to think you must go to a heart-searching God before you sleep; and so pray, as if it were the last time you should approach to God with your family in this world. Study the frame of your hearts; be not content with lip-labour: rest not in the work done, without communion with God: presume not upon your own goodness, you that are the holiest: despair not because of your wickedness or guiltiness, you that think yourselves the worst of men: remember, Manasseh prayed, and God was entreated of him, when he humbled himself greatly.† Be not discouraged because you cannot do so well as others: "God despiseth not the day of small things." ‡ God hath babes in his family, that chatter like a crane or swallow. || A child's lisping is understood by an indulgent father: and if a distempered child stoop down, and reach us up any small thing, we take it kindly; so doth God when a sick soul falls low in humility, and reacheth high in heavenly-mindedness. You cannot be always actually on your knees, or speaking with your tongues, but still maintain a praying frame of heart. Mr. Greenham saith, When one asks how your family doth, let this put you in mind to pray for them; thank God for mercies; reflect on yourselves, what have I done for their welfare? how are the

* 1 Chron. xxix. 9—14.
† 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.
‡ Zech. iv. 10
|| Isa. xxxviii. 14.

souls of my children, servants? and lift up an ejaculation for them. Be much in prayer: give yourselves to prayer: prayer is your physic, your armoury, your ammunition, your antidote against Satan, the world, and the flesh. This is your way of trading with God for the richest commodities for yourselves and yours; the profit will be yours, the glory God's.

To help you in this work, I have written this Treatise, not having seen any directly upon this so needful a subject, and was requested to do something this way; but after I had completely finished the following work, there came to my hands a very learned and elaborate discourse,* of Mr. Thos. Doolittle's, on Josh. xxiv. 15, to rivet this nail, which may seem to render this Essay needless; yet for the following reasons if it be judged convenient, I am willing it should go to the Press. 1. That excellent discourse full of sinewy arguments may be more suitable to learned, this plain Treatise to vulgar capacities, being adapted to the common use of country people. 2. Both matter and method are far different, as I perceive upon reading and comparing both. 3. That discourse is inserted amongst the voluminous books of Morning Lectures; this being a small thing by itself, is more attainable and portable. 4. Possibly this may fall into some hands, into which the former hath not fallen, and may be an appendix and supplement to that choice piece, which I do earnestly recommend to the reader to purchase and peruse; and if this my slender attempt may provoke any to purchase that, and both together may but attain this great end of setting up family worship in the power of it, I have my end, and shall follow all these spiritual helps with my earnest prayers, that the God of all grace would pour into your souls the Spirit of grace and supplication; make the members of your families conscientious in joining; and governors and governed orthodox in principles, sincere in their spirits, and holy in their practices, to the glory of God, and good of his church; which is the hearty desire of thy soul's friend,

Feb. 2, 1692–3. OLIVER HEYWOOD.

* Supplement to Morning Exercises at Cripplegate. Printed 1676.

RECOMMENDATORY EPISTLE.

THIS Discourse, and that other by the Reverend Mr. Newcome on Prov. xxv. 28, do very opportunely come out together, both in reference to one another, and to the time we live in, and to that which should be aimed at in all times, the reviving and keeping alive of serious, practical religion, but most of all in this time wherein it so much languishes.

They that know the Reverend Author of this work, or have perused, (with desire to profit,) those pious practical Treatises, which he hath formerly published, will think as we do, that there is no need of any letters commendatory to bespeak a favourable acceptance of the following Discourse. The design of which is to persuade and engage those that are heads and governors of families, to take up Joshua's resolution; that whatever others do, yet "they and their houses will serve the Lord," in daily, faithful, fervent prayer, with thanksgiving.

It is a word in season; for it is a common complaint, and that too, by many, who are not a little guilty of it themselves; that the power of godliness, the life of practical religion, is at this day under a lamentable decay; and amongst the many causes of this decay, there is scarcely any that hath been more perniciously influential thereunto, than the neglect of family worship of God, which is one most proper means to promote seriousness in religion. Frequent solemn addresses to God, having a tendency to keep God in remembrance, and to cause the apprehensions of God to make the deeper impressions, and to have the stronger influence upon the hearts of those who have not quite lost all sense of a God, or forgotten that they have souls to save, or lose. Prayer also being a means of God's appointment, to obtain family blessings and mercies, as well as personal and national, according to the many promises which God hath made of audience and acceptance of the prayers that

are put up unto him in the name of Christ, with upright hearts. To those that sincerely love God, and have wisdom to judge of things as they relate to eternity, the duty commended in this Treatise, will appear not only to be a necessary duty, but a precious privilege, and gracious vouchsafement. For there are two things which do especially render a Christian's continuance in the world desirable and comfortable to him; the one is, that he may acquaint himself with God, and enjoy some sweet communion with him, which is a beginning and foretaste of heaven whilst we are here on earth. They that are utter strangers to this, have no cause to think, that they are as yet made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The other desirable end or business of a Christian's life is, that he may be serviceable to God, by promoting his glory and interest in the world, especially by furthering the spiritual good, and salvation of souls; both these do meet together in the conscientious practice of this duty.

First; Communion with God. When the head and master of a family, who is as prophet, priest, and ruler in his family, doth jointly with his children and servants, as a little church of God in his house, offer up daily sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving unto God, the author of their beings, the God of their lives, and the giver of every good gift wherewith their lives are sweetened; and does also receive from him communications of grace and mercy; for our bountiful God will never be behindhand with those that seek him in truth, but giveth liberally to them that ask in faith.

Secondly; Serviceableness unto God, in training up his family in the fear of God; God himself bearing witness how greatly acceptable family righteousness is unto him, in that high commendation, which he hath recorded of Abraham: "I know him," saith God, "that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." It is a duty that is both work and wages; a service, that carries its reward with it, (reward not of debt, but of grace) it brings a blessing upon a family, as the ark did on the house of Obed-Edom; when on the contrary dreadful wrath is imprecated to be "poured out upon the families that call not on the name of God," Jer. x. 25.

Reader, if thou be one that livest in the daily exercise, and due performance of this duty of family prayer, thy own experience of the spiritual benefits and advantages of it, will enable thee to set to thy seal to what the God of truth hath spoken in his word. "I never said to the seed of Jacob, (Israelites indeed, that know how to wrestle with God,) seek ye my face in vain." But if being a master of a family, thou be a stranger to this duty, either through slothfulness, multiplicity of business, or prejudice and disaffection to the duty; the Reverend Author hath said enough to convince thee, that it is thy duty; and if convinced hereof, thou wilt continue in the wilful neglect of thy known duty, thou dost in effect say with those in Jer. xliv. 16, "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee;" what an aggravation will this be of thy sin! "for to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin," Jam. iv. 17, that is, exceeding sinful; and also of thy punishment! for "that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47. That the one and the other may be prevented, and thou mayest be prevailed with conscientiously to practise this duty, is the design of this Treatise, and the hearty desire of

Thine in the Lord,

JOHN STARKEY.
JOHN HOWE.

A

FAMILY ALTAR,

ERECTED TO

THE HONOUR OF THE ETERNAL GOD.

GENESIS XXXV. 1—3.

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

CHAP. I.

EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT.

THIS passage is copious, and may be called a family text, as comprehending the whole duty of householders and their inferiors: he that is not relatively religious, is not really religious: God hath to do with all men in every capacity: and men have to do with God in all their circumstances, relations, and actions. As we must give an account to God of our natural, civil, and

spiritual acts: God's word must regulate all we do, that we may act as Christians, according to God's will, and for his glory. The passage contains an excellent pattern for all families.

The whole of the context holds forth the following general considerations:

God's commission to Jacob, v. 1.—*Jacob's charge to his family, v.* 2, 3.—*His family's cheerful compliance, v.* 4.—*The blessed issue, namely, success and safety, v.* 5.—Let me briefly advert to these.

I. The words contain God's commission to Jacob; in which commission observe four things:

The privacy of it; God spake to Jacob when alone. —*The order;* "Arise, go to Bethel, dwell there."—*The duty to be done;* "make there an altar."—*The reasons to enforce that duty.* First, God's appearing to him; and secondly, his danger—fleeing from his brother.

Doct. 1. That most of God's manifestations to his people are personal, or when they are alone.

Jacob was alone when he had the vision of the ladder, Gen. xxviii. 12. and when God bids him return to the land of his fathers, Gen. xxxi. 3. Jacob was left alone when he wrestled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 24. Our Lord invites souls to solitary recesses, where he whispers them in the ear, speaks to their heart, there usually is a reciprocal expression of love:* It is good being alone with God.† Happy souls that can say with our dear Lord, John xvi. 32, "Ye shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

From the order and appointment, "arise, go to Bethel," we may derive,

Doct. 2. God alone is the fittest to dispose of men's habitations.

* Hos. ii. 14. Song vii. 11, 12.

† Nunquam minus solus quàm cum solus.

Deut. xxxii. 8. "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance; when he separated the sons of Adam." The great God is the author of all topography and geography, as well as geneaology and chronology. Acts xvii. 26. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations." And as God is the sovereign disposer of all; so what he doth is in infinite wisdom, as a general of an army, ordering the troops to their distinct posts, with which all men must be contented.*

But why doth God bid Jacob here go to Bethel?

Ans. 1. To convince him of his absolute dependance upon God, and his duty of resignation of himself and all he had to God's good pleasure.

2. To quiet Jacob's spirit who was at this time full of fears, because of the late slaughter of the Shechemites, chap. xxxiv. 30.

3. To secure him and his family from danger, by carrying them to a safer place out of harm's way; Bethel being thirty English miles distant from Shechem,† southwards: God hath his Patmos for his servants in times of danger; his Pella for his hidden ones in a universal slaughter.

4. To put Jacob upon paying his vows; for hitherto he had been slack in making good his promise made at Bethel, chap. xxviii. 22.

We have next the duty God puts Jacob upon, which is to make there an altar unto God; which he must do, partly to maintain and promote God's worship; partly to strengthen his faith against his present fears,

* Nunc videmus sicut in castris sua cuique turmæ et decuriæ distincta est statio ita in terra locatos esse homines, ut singuli populi suis finibus contenti sint; et in ipsis populis suum quisque, domicilium incolat.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Gen. xxviii. 11. 19.

from the gracious discoveries he had at Bethel, Gen. xxxi. 13.

Doct. 3. God will be worshipped wherever his people inhabit.

Men's shifting their habitation must not divorce them from God and religion: as God is every where present, so in every place incense must be offered to his name, Mal. i. 11. Change of place must not lessen our piety.

Further it is assigned as a reason to enforce this duty, that God appeared to him at Bethel, from which we may infer,

Doct. 4. Former appearances of God to his children are mementos of present duty.

Jacob had been nine years in the country, and had not returned to Bethel to pay his vows made there; whether it was, that he waited for a fit opportunity, to do it solemnly with tythes or sacrifices: or waited for an admonition from God, and hoped that he would signify his mind, since he wholly depended on the divine appointment:* or, whether now his new straits put him in mind of his old straits and relief: or, whether this was Jacob's sin to forget and neglect this duty; which is most likely, as rich Jacob sometimes forgets what poor Jacob had vowed.

Doct. 5. God hath a time and a way to rub up his people's memories to perform forgotten duties.

God tells him there was a day when he fled from Esau his brother, and now lets him see the danger he is in of the Canaanites, that he may perform old duties before he expect new mercies.† And indeed new straits revive old guilt, Gen. xlii. 21.

* Totus à divino nutu pendebat, nec dubitabat Dominum illi significaturum tempus.—*Vide Poli Syn. in loc.*

† Dr. Lightfoot on Genesis thinks God was angry with Jacob

Thus much for the first general thing, God's commission.

II. Here is Jacob's charge to his family, ver. 2, 3. "Then Jacob said to his household—" wherein Jacob as a householder acts the part of a *prophet*, *priest*, and *king*.

1. He is as a prophet, to instruct his family in the mind of God; teaching them their duty; informing them of what he had resolved to do; and communicating to them his own experience for argument and encouragement, namely, his prayer, and God's answer; in his deliverance, and direction, verse 3.

2. He acts herein as a priest in his own house, in making an altar unto God, and in pouring a drink-offering, and also oil thereon, verse 14.

3. He acts the part of a king or supreme governor, over his own family which consists,

(1.) In the command he gives them, to put away strange gods; to be clean and to change their garments.

(2.) In his actual exercise of jurisdiction, manifested by their compliance, ver. 4, they gave him the strange gods, and ear-rings; and by his demolishing them, or putting them out of their sight—he hid them.

Qu. 1. How came idols to be in Jacob's family?

Ans. (1). Either those newly taken from the Shechemites, amongst other spoils, chap. xxxiv. 29, which Jacob's sons might keep, not to worship, but for their precious matter, of gold or silver.

(2.) Or Jacob's Gentile servants kept these images to worship secretly, unknown to Jacob.

(3.) Or they might be retained, and used by Leah, or Jacob's two wives, or his concubines, Bilhah and

for distrusting his promise, and sending Esau 500 cattle, of which he had vowed the tythes to the Lord, therefore sought to kill him. Observ. on Gen. p. 16.

Zilpah, or Deborah nurse to Rebecca; for idolatry was but gradually extinguished.

(4.) Why might not these gods be the images that his beloved Rachel stole? chap. xxxi. 19; they are called teraphim or images; Laban calls them his gods, ver. 30; they were made in the shape of men, whom the heathen adored as subordinate gods, to whom they committed the protection of their houses, with whom they consulted about secret or future things, from whom they received delusory and diabolical answers; these idols Laban worshipped together with the true God, which Rachel took as due to her for a portion; or it may be, to prevent her father's consulting them, that they might not inform him which way Jacob fled: but charity bids us believe that Rachel stole these idols, to expose his egregious folly in worshipping gods that might be stolen, or at least, to take away an occasion of her father's idolatry.

Qu. 2. Why did Jacob bury them, or hide them under an oak, and not break them to pieces?

Ans. (1.) The Greek version addeth, καὶ ἀπωλεσεν αὐτὰ ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας, and destroyed or lost them, even until this day. And it seems probable from parallel instances, that he first melted them, and then hid them.*

(2.) He did this privately, not known to his family, so that they could not seek for them or find them. And they being now to depart thence, could not have an opportunity to inquire after them.†

(3.) There is a peculiar reason, why he hid them in this place. Whether we take it for a terebinth, or turpentine tree as the Greeks translate it, καὶ κατέκρυψεν αὐτὰ Ἰακωβ ὑπερ τὴν τερέβενθον, or an oak, as we read it, for the Hebrew word אלה signifies either; if we re-

* Exod. xxxii. 20. 2 Kings xviii. 4.

† De non existentibus et non apparentibus eadem est ratio.

spect verse 8, we find Deborah was buried under an oak, called Allon-Bacuth, the oak of weeping, a fit funeral for dead idols.

(4.) Interpreters give us two reasons why they buried these idols under an oak; first, because those trees were generally abused to idolatry, as Isa. i. 29; therefore proper places for interment of these monuments of idolatry. Secondly, this was the safest place; where they were likely to remain longest hid, because the heathen had a great veneration for oaks, therefore would not cut them down, or dig them up. Besides, critics observe, that the root of this word signifies an execrable, doleful tree; such as is wont to be planted by idol groves; therefore he hid these execrable idols in that place. *

Doct. 6. It is fit all monuments and occasions of idolatry be put out of people's sight.

See Exod xxiii. 13. Deut. xii. 2, 3. Hos. ii. 16, 17.

Doct. 7. A resolute reformation produceth safety and satisfaction.

When Jacob had taken this course, the terror of God came upon the cities round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob, ver. 5, they became still as a stone, their desire to hurt them was restrained, or they were dispirited; yea, God made them friends to them. O wonderful work of Almighty God!

But all this is a digression from my main design; I shall not meddle with Jacob's prophetical and regal office over his family, but speak chiefly or only to his priestly and sacerdotal office, signified here by his making an altar unto God.

* Si radix spectetur, significat arborem execrabilem funestam quales apud idolorum delubra plantari solent, et fortè hâc de causâ sub ea execrabilia idola recondidit.—*Vid. Poli. Crit. in loc.*

The famous Usher in his annals on the third age of the world, fol. 9, saith, Jacob was ninety-one years of age when Joseph was born, consequently seventy-seven years old when he began first to serve Laban; upon his return into Canaan he built an altar, which he called El-Elohe-Israel, that is, the mighty God, the God of Israel, Gen. xxxiii. 20; which was the self-same place were Abraham heretofore had built his first altar, Gen. xii. 6, 7, and where Jacob's well was, near to mount Gerizim, John iv. 5, 20. This was about the year of the world 2273, 1731 before the birth of Christ; he died at the age of 147 years, 2315 years after the creation. Having got both the birth-right and blessing from his brother Esau, he was thus priest in the family, till God settled the privilege of priesthood on the tribe of Levi, instead of the first-born. He saith, this history of Genesis contains the story of 2369 years' space; he quotes Servius Sulpicius, affirming that in this tract of time lived Job, a man embracing the law of nature, and the knowledge of the true God, &c. But this by the way.

The altar which Jacob now was to build, was at Bethel, formerly called Luz, Gen. xxviii. 19; which should be God's house, ver. 22, where he would offer prayers and sacrifices to God, and where God promiseth and vouchsafeth his special presence, according to Exod. xx. 24. Whether Jacob repaired the old pillar, his quondam pillow, chap. xxviii. 18, which might be ruined by the injury of time, or demolished by idolatrous neighbours; or whether he erected a new one, more stable, durable, and fashionable than time and his former low circumstances would then permit, it is not much material to dispute; though most probably the latter. However this altar was a monument of God's mercy, and a token of his present gratitude;

and the use and end of it was to offer sacrifice, so saith the text, Gen. xxxv. 14; he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon; these were to be joined with a sacrifice, Exod. xxix. 40, called drink-offerings, Numb. xxviii. 14.

Concerning an altar observe, the scripture takes notice of three descriptions of altars, *a literal* or *typical altar*, *a mystical*, and *a metaphorical altar*.

1. The literal, or typical altar existed either before the law or under the law; the first altar we read of is that of Noah, Gen. viii. 20; yet those sacrifices of which we read, Gen. iv, presuppose an altar. Under the Mosaical dispensation, there were two sorts of altars; *the altar of burnt-offering*, and *of incense:* the former in the wilderness was built of earth; and, saith Mr. Weemse, the Lord would have it so, because he would not have it permanent, to remain after they were gone out of the wilderness; and he would not have it made of hewn stone, to signify, that men's inventions do but pollute the worship of God,* Exod. xx. 24, 25. This is an altar most holy, Exod. xl. 10; it signified the death of Christ for satisfaction to divine justice. There was also the altar of incense, mentioned Exod. xxx. 27; this is called the golden altar, Exod. xl. 26, 27; and it holds forth Christ's intercession at God's right hand. The four horns signify the strength and prevalence of Christ's advocacy. None might go to the golden altar to offer incense, but he who might go to the brazen altar to offer sacrifice. So we have no mediator of intercession, but he that is the mediator of our redemption.

2. A mystical altar; that is Christ Jesus only, Heb. xiii. 10, "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle." This is in

* See Mr. Weemse's Expos. of Cerem. Laws, Com. 2. pag. 46.

opposition to the Mosaical. Our new testament altar, Christ, affords to us our soul's sustenance, safe protection sanctification, justification, consolation, eternal salvation. We need no other; we have all in Christ, see Isa. lvi. 7. Rev. viii. 3.

3. There is a metaphorical altar, figuratively so called: so gospel-ministration is called an altar, 1 Cor. ix. 13. They which wait at the altar are partakers of the altar, that is, of holy things, or things of the temple in allusion to the Old Testament dispensation. So the worship of God is called the altar, Matt. v. 23, 24. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, that is, to God in a religious exercise: yea, the whole gospel-worship is thus denominated, Rev. xi. 1, "Rise, measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein;" that is, look that gospel-service be regular according to God's word, cleansed from antichristian pollutions: this is prophesied, Isa. xix. 19, "In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt;" that is, God's worship shall be settled in all places in gospel-times, not a Levitical, but evangelical altar. Nothing is more common in the Old and New Testament, than to speak of gospel-worship in the phraseology of the law.

The like may be said of sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices in a gospel sense; so offering ourselves up to God, Rom. xii. 1. Prayer and praise, Heb. xiii. 15. Acts of charity, *v.* 16. A broken heart, Psal. li. 17. Martyrdom, Phil. ii. 17.

As for a false altar, constituted in the Romish church, upon which they would offer Christ daily as a sacrifice for quick and dead, Protestants renounce it, as a crucifying the Son of God again, and inconsistent with scripture and reason, Heb. ix. 25; nor yet that he should offer himself often, *v.* 26, 28; "Christ was

once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. x. 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It cannot be denied that the ancients have called the Lord's supper, an unbloody sacrifice; the table, an altar; ministers, priests; the whole action, an oblation: not however in the sense the Papists do, but by way of allusion, as it is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice; or as spiritual prayers, praises, alms are its attendants, as our divines have abundantly proved; and disproved the propriety of the language as applied to that ordinance.

Well then, we renounce Popish altars, sacrifices, and priests, yet acknowledge in a spiritual sense, that Christ by his blood hath made all believers kings and priests unto God and his Father,* Rev. i. 6: and that we "are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.

The words being thus explained, I shall raise this important

Doctrine, That governors of families must as priests erect family-altars for God's worship.

It well becomes householders or governors of families, to set up and maintain family-altars for worshipping of God with the members of their families.

As holy Jacob, the famous patriarch, was a prophet to instruct his family in the true religion, and a king to govern them for God; so a priest to set up an altar, offer sacrifices and perform religious worship for and with his family: even the poorest man that has a family is to be prophet, priest, and king in his own house.

God commands Jacob to build an altar at Bethel,

* Quid opus est altari ubi nec ignis ardeat, nec victimæ cædantur,—*Pet. Martyr cont. Gard.*

Jacob resolves upon it, and gives all his family orders how to conduct themselves in managing this important affair; and when they did their duty, God secured them, they journeyed and passed on safely.

Let none say that this setting up of an altar by Jacob was but ordered upon this particular occasion, that he might pay his vows formerly made at Bethel, and so doth not oblige us.

I answer, (1.) It is true the circumstances of the place, occasion, and solemnity are personal and particular, but the duty is general, moral, and perpetual, as I shall prove.

(2.) Jacob, doubtless, worshipped God with his family in all places where he had come, as he took the fear of God with him in his heart, so he left not the external practice of religion behind him: but set up God's worship which was equivalent to an altar in all places where he came, as his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham had done.

(3.) And may not we have the like occasion as he had to rear an altar? Have we had no mercies from God? Do we lie under no vows, or at least, obligagations to the Lord? And do not these precedents, and general rules bind us to the like practice, without having a particular command by a voice from heaven, or in an extraordinary way?

(4.) Because Jacob was left alone, and wrestled with the angel and prevailed upon an extraordinary occasion, Gen. xxxii. 24.; that is, when in fear of his brother Esau; shall we think that Jacob never prayed alone, but when he was in the like hazard? yes, doubtless he was well acquainted with God, and much accustomed to this practice of conversing with God. So because we find God prompting him to this family exercise

here, can this be thought to exclude his ordinary course of family proceeding? No, certainly, it rather implies and includes this.

In prosecuting the subject I shall use this method,

1. Explain what I mean by altars in families.
2. Prove it to be the duty of householders to set them up.
3. Answer objections against this practice.
4. Make some deductions and application.

CHAP. II.

STATEMENT OF WHAT IS MEANT BY FAMILY-ALTARS, AND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF HOUSE-HOLDERS.

By altar I mean (considered as an instance of synecdoche) all the worship of God to be performed in families. To an altar in old times literally, and in gospel-times mystically, or metaphorically; there are four things requisite:—

1. The institution or consecration; none can appoint an altar to be erected but God, Exod. xx. 24, "An altar of earth shalt thou make." None hath power to order God's worship but himself alone. Men may not add or diminish at their pleasure. Ministers must teach, Christians must observe all things whatsoever our Lord commandeth us.* Men may dedicate an altar—it is God alone that properly consecrates or sanctifies it;† yet men are said to consecrate themselves to the Lord, yea, and other things in a secondary way, and instrumentally:‡ but as God appoints, so himself

* Matt. xxviii. 20. † Numb. vii. 10. ‡ 2 Chron. xxix. 31, 33.

only doth authoritatively, efficiently, actually, consecrate persons and things. Let us see, we have a warrant from God for what we do in his worship.

2. An altar requires a priest. Before the Mosaic law, the first-born of the family was priest to offer on the altar; but afterwards God took the tribe of Levi instead of the first-born, in remembrance of the Lord's smiting the first-born in Egypt, Numb. iii. 12, 13. Aaron and his family were the blossoming rod whom God had chosen in a peculiar manner to appear before him:* but our Lord Jesus is our New Testament Aaron, yet above him, even after the order of Melchizedeck;† a higher order than that of Aaron. Upon whose account all God's saints are kings and priests:‡ for as Christ's divinity sanctified his humanity, since our Lord as God sanctified himself as man; so he also sanctifies all his saints; "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;‖ for this end, that they may be a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."§

3. A priest must needs have something to offer upon this altar.¶ The priests under the law offered bulls, goats, and other brute beasts. Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Saints offer their souls and bodies as a thank-offering unto the Lord; besides their prayers and praises, as was hinted before: but the Holy Ghost adviseth us to be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools, Eccles. v. 1. or than fools to give sacrifice, who vainly think to please God with the variety and costliness of their offerings. "Obedience is better than sacrifice; and the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord;" therefore it becomes us all to look to our state and standing, and also to

* Numb. xvii. 8. † Heb. vi. 20. ‡ John xvii. 19.
‖ Heb. x. 14. § 1 Pet. ii. 5. ¶ Heb. viii. 3, 4.

the manner of our sacrificing, as well as the matter sacrificed.

4. As to the altar, there must be respect to the end and design of this altar; for the end either makes or mars the action. Now the text saith, "I will make there an altar unto God;" and God saith, "an altar shalt thou make unto me;" not to idols, nor to themselves, to please their own fancy, or for vain-glory.* God threatens he will break down all such altars:† for though every family must have their distinct altar in their peculiar relative capacities, yet they must only make use of the one altar Christ Jesus for acceptance, and worship God after the pattern shewed in the mount; that the Lord may be one and his name one,‡ that is, his worship uniform, and the same in all places. Hence it was that when the two tribes and a half had made an altar, the other tribes were offended, and prepared war against them; till they were assured it was not in opposition, but as a testimonial of their relation, and worshipping the same God, therefore they called it Ed, a witness: read the story, Jos. xxii. 10, 34. Every family must erect such an altar, to be a witness that they serve the same God who is worshipped in public assemblies, and in the catholic church in all times and places.

Only this altar of which I am now treating, is distinct from *public*, and also *secret personal altars*.

1. It is not properly public, either national or congregational, such as that which David erected, 2 Sam. xxiv. 18, "Gad came to David and said, go up, rear an altar unto the Lord." This was for all Israel to make an atonement, and this was the place where the temple was to be built, whither all the tribes were to go up to worship God: however, this family-altar must not

* Exod. xx. 24. Hos. viii. 11. † Hos. x. 2. ‡ Zech. xiv. 9.

exclude public ordinances, upon which holy David's heart was so set, that he envies the sparrow and swallow that built their nests near God's altars,* and is transported with an extacy of holy joy at his approach to it: "Then will I go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."† No, no, the more a Christian is conversant with God in his family, the more will he prize and improve public ordinances.

2. This is distinct from secret acts of worship or personal altars, such as Abraham erected, Gen. xii. 7, 8, "The Lord appeared unto Abraham; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord:" and in the next verse, "called upon the name of the Lord." Howbeit some expositors think this was a family-altar, which Abraham erected, to keep his family in the true religion; and to separate himself and them from the idolatrous neighbourhood: if so, it confirms my assertion in favour of family-altars. But certainly that in Gen. xxii. 9. was more personal: so was Jacob's, Gen. xxviii. 18.

This therefore that I am speaking of is a family-altar, an emblem of family worship.

It is true sometimes a family signifies a whole nation, a kingdom, Amos iii. 1. "The whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt:" that is all the Hebrews, afterwards divided into the two families of Judah and Ephraim, Jer. xxxiii. 24. The sons of Adam were all one family, and after the confusion of languages they were distributed into the several regions of the world, and had their names from the head and root of that family from whence they sprung.‡ This is not the notion of family here: but it is to be taken strictly for persons dwelling together in one house; Lev. xx. 5 "Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family:" this is distinct from king-

* Psal. lxxxiv. 3. † Psal. xliii. 4. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 8. Jer. viii. 3.

doms and provinces; Judg. i. 25. "They let go the man and all his family." Esth. ix. 28, where family is distinguished from province and city: and this is the most obvious and ordinary use of the word: and in the text the restriction is to Jacob and his house. Lawyers, civilians, divines thus use the word and say, that a house or family is a society most agreeable to nature.* In this house are such as are most ordinarily and familiarly conversant together, that work, eat, drink, and sleep under one roof. To a complete family (say they) are requisite father, mother, son, and servant:† but indeed the proper constituent, essential parts of a family are but these two, *such as govern*, and *such as are governed.*

And ordinarily the person governing must set up this altar, and order the worship of God in his house or family together with the rest: hear what a great divine, now with God, saith on this point: Baxter's Christian Directory, tom. 2. fol. 490, "Note therefore that the governor is an essential part of the family, and so are some of the number of the governed, but not each member; if therefore twenty children or servants shall worship God without their father or master of the family, either present himself, or in some representative, it is not family-worship in a strict sense: but if the head of the family personally (or his delegate, or representative) be present with any of his children or servants, though all the rest be absent, it is yet a family-duty, though the family be incomplete and maimed, (and so is the duty therefore, if culpably so performed;)" thus far that reverend man of God.

If it be inquired, how must a householder act the part of a priest in his family? what must he do? I

* Domus est naturæ consentanea societas.

† 1. Paterfamilias. 2. Materfamilias. 3. Filius. 4. Servus.

answer; the office and business of a priest in the Old Testament consisted in these four things chiefly:—

1. To instruct the people in the principles of religion, and their duty to God and each other; Mal. ii. 7. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth:" therefore God rejected those priests that rejected knowledge; Hos. iv. 6. This is the work of householders, Deut. vi. 6, 7. "Thou shalt teach these things diligently unto thy children."

2. To manage the holy offerings and sacrifices for atonement on behalf of the children of Israel, Lev. xvi. 11. Aaron must make an atonement for himself, and for his house;*—and ver. 21. "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel:" thus did Job, chap. i. 5; he rose early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned." Thus must we do, confess the sins of our family, and beg pardon through Christ.

3. The priest was to intercede for the people, as Aaron was to take a censer, and put fire thereon from the altar, and put on incense, and stand between the dead and living, Numb. xvi. 46, 48. Hence the priest's office was to burn incense in the temple, and the multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense, Luke i. 9, 10. For as often as the priest entered into the holy place, he appeared as in the presence of God, that he might be a mediator between God and the people.† It is true, there is no mediator

* Lev. i. 5, 8.

† Nam quoties in Sanctum ingrediebatur sacerdos, quasi in Dei conspectum prodibat, ut inter eum et populum esset Mediator.—*Calv. in loc.*

of intercession, no more than of redemption betwixt God and sinners, but Jesus Christ alone in a proper sense; yet as one may pray and prevail for another through Christ, so a pious householder may and must be the mouth of his family on their behalf.

4. The priest was to bless the people, Numb. vi. 23. "Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, saying, on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee, and keep thee," &c. Doubtless this was supplicatory, or by way of petition, and God answers that prayer, ver. 27, "And I will bless them." But how far they did this in the name, and by the authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I cannot say. Weemse tells us,* that the priests lifted up both their hands when they blessed the people. The text in Psalm cxxxiv. 2, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary," alludes to this; because the priests could not lay their hands upon all the people, they lifted them up; for in blessing they were wont to lay on their hands, therefore Jacob laid his hands on Joseph's sons.† There was a sacerdotal, a patriarchal, and a parental blessing. Thus the chief of a family blesseth his household, 2 Sam. vi. 20, "Then David returned to bless his household;" which was by prayer, and in the name of the Lord, pronouncing a blessing upon his family; not as a priest, nor as a prophet only but as a governor of his household, which the meanest householder may, and should do.

* Weemse's Christian Syn. p. 311. † Gen. xlviii. 17.

CHAP. III.

ARGUMENTS TO PROVE THAT GOVERNORS OF FAMILIES SHOULD SET UP ALTARS FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

THE second thing proposed is, to bring forward proof of this doctrine, That householders should erect altars for the worship of God in their families.

1. The command of God. Prayer is a great duty required of all men; the text saith, Pray without ceasing,* 1 Thess. v. 17. This is not to be understood in the sense in which the Euchites or Messalians of old understood it, as excluding other duties, but either maintaining a praying disposition, or improving all seasons of prayer, using a constant course of praying; to form a custom of praying is a duty, therefore we are bid to watch unto prayer, as well as watch in prayer;† that is, be sure you observe the hours and seasons of prayer, in your closet, in your family, and in public; be not absent; be not negligent. Then for the place, 1 Tim. ii. 8, "I will that men pray every where;" if in all places then in their houses, and with their families in conjunction; for it means our common dwellings, as well as temples, since there is no promise peculiarly appropriated to one place, more than another, under the gospel; for so was the prediction, "In every place incense shall be offered to my name."‡ Then for the sorts of prayer, read Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" that is, mental or vocal prayer; petition for good,

* So Mephibosheth ate bread at David's table continually, that is, at meal times, 2 Sam. ix. 7. So in due season is explained, as signifying continually, Numb. xxviii. 2, 3.

† 1 Pet. iv. 7. Col. iv. 2. ‡ John iv. 21. Mal. i. 11.

deprecation of evil, intercession for others, thanksgiving for mercies; in public assemblies, in private houses, in secret closets. Certainly these kinds of prayer are necessarily included; and by good consequence inferred. Let none say, this is far fetched, for scripture consequence is good argument, as our Saviour proves the resurrection.* If prayer at all times, in all places, of all sorts, be a duty, surely family prayer is a duty, for it must be included in these.

2. Scripture types show the obligation of family worship. The passover was celebrated in private houses, Exod. xii. 3, "They shall take to them every man a lamb—a lamb for a house," that is, household, ver. 4. For the Hebrews say there must be ten, if one family was not sufficient, they must call in the members of another family; for it must all be eaten at once. The passover was a commemoration of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the saving of their first-born, when the first-born of Egypt were destroyed. The master of the family took bread, and brake it, hence he was called a breaker; then he blessed it, saying, Blessed art thou, O Lord God, King of the world, who bringest bread out of the earth; then gave to every one about the quantity of an olive, to some the bigness of an egg. This, saith Weemse, was at their common supper with which the passover was joined;† and doubtless religion should always attend our civil concerns. This exhibits family devotion; let none say, this was their sacrament; for though it was, yet it was family religion; and though it typified the Lord Jesus, and corresponded to the Lord's supper in the new testament, which is a church ordinance; yet

* Matt. xxii. 29, 22.

† Weemse's Christian Syn. pag. 132, whether there were two suppers or not. See Godwin, Moses and Aaron, lib. iii. c. 4. p. 137.

it also held forth God's worship in families. But a clearer type is the morning and evening sacrifice; one lamb was to be offered in the morning, the other in the evening; this must be day by day, continually, Exod. xxix. 38, 39. This was for every individual family, and person, and it must be every day, not only on Sabbath days, and other solemnities, but it shews that God must be daily worshipped; yes, it must be morning and evening, that prayer and praise may be the lock and key of the day. And David alludes to this, saying, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning; and let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."* This was constantly practised, but solemnly; yet we do not find that the whole assembly met every day, therefore it was most probably, a family exercise.

3. Natural religion prompts to it. There is certainly such a thing as the law and light of nature, which puts men on to what is morally good, and restrains them from, or checks them for, what is grossly evil; hence the apostle saith, "The Gentiles do by nature some things materially good, and natural conscience accuseth or excuseth;"† so he appealeth to nature, as an argument, *a fortiori*; "Doth not even nature itself teach you?"‡ Whence these κοιναὶ ἔννοια, common workings proceed, I dispute not, whether from some relics of God's image in man, (which some censure as Pelagianism,) or they be superinduced by God since the fall for the benefit of mankind.‖ But doubtless such notions there are, as that there is a God, a supreme Being; that he is to be feared, loved, and worshipped; and that not only individually, but socially, in families as well as alone, or in greater assemblies;

* Psalm v. 4. cxli. 2. † Rom. ii. 14, 15. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 14.
‖ See Mr. Capel on Temptation.

hence besides their national, and city gods, the Romans had their Lares and Penates, their household gods, though, alas, they were but dumb idols; hence it may be, idolatrous Micah had a house of gods;* and shall poor dim-sighted heathens think it highly rational to have dunghill gods in their houses? and shall not men professing the religion of the true God, own their omnipresent God, by setting up an altar to him in their houses? the prophet speaks peremptorily, Mic. iv. 5, "All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God, for ever and ever." Is there not much more reason? and should not such as own the true God keep pace with these poor idolaters in acting for, and worshipping the true God? shall nature teach them to have more care of their children than Christians in God's way? Yea, shall even the sea monsters, draw out their breasts and give suck to their young ones?† and shall Christians be so cruel to the souls of theirs, as to neglect this household duty.

4. The prophecies and promises of the word imply this family worship: Jer. xxxi. 1, "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel; and they shall be my people." Whether this mean all the twelve tribes, or Judah only, it is a gospel promise, and implies worship; for relation to God is inseparable from adoration of him; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God;"‡ and this in families, not only larger, but lesser. Holiness to the Lord, is not only to be written on the bells of the horses, but the

* Judg. xvii. 5. † Lam. iv. 3.

‡ Matt. iv. 10. Putatis nos occultare quod colimus, si delubra et aras non habemus—cum sic litabilis hostia bonus animus et pura mens, ut sincera conscientia—hæc nostra sacrificia, hæc Dei sacra sunt; sic apud nos religiosior est ille, qui castior.—*Minucii Felicis.*

pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar; that is, their very kitchen stuff, and common utensils shall be reckoned as holy as altar vessels immediately employed in sacrifices; yea further, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be "holiness to the Lord of hosts," Zech. xiv. 20, 21. The persons and utensils in private shall all be dedicated to God, and accepted by him in gospel times; civilities shall savour of sanctity; these new testament priests shall without scruple, serve God in their houses; every family shall be a temple, wherein God will be worshipped; house pots shall be holy vessels. This is meant of Gentile worshippers, ver. 16; and Jews shall not be behind them, Zech. xii. 12—14, "The land shall mourn, every family apart," in the Hebrew, *families, families*, royal family, sacerdotal tribe, and common people; they shall mourn apart, and shut up themselves apart from company and pleasures to exercise godly sorrow, vent their spirits in penitent prayers, and mournful groans for their barbarous crucifying of the Prince of Life. This some from all places did at Jerusalem, Acts ii; and more shall do it the day of their general call and conversion to God.

5. The servants of God have practised it. You can scarce name a religious householder, but he hath set up an altar in his family, and offered spiritual sacrifices thereupon. Joshua a noble warrior resolves upon this, chap. xxiv. 15, "But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord;" let others do as they dare answer it another day, I with my children and servants must and will worship the Lord. Worshipping God is serving him, Psal. lxxii. 11, "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him,"* that is, by calling on God in prayer; doubtless Joshua did this. David a great king, in the

* Zeph. iii. 9.

midst of political and eccelesiastical employments withdraws himself from all, and returns to bless his house,* 2 Sam. vi 20, which could be no other way but by prayer, and praising God for and with his family. Public occasions must not justle out this family-worshipping. Job rose up early in the morning, offered burnt-offerings, sanctified the members of his family, and, lest it be thought that this was but occasional and accidental, the text saith, "Thus did Job continually," chap. i. 5. And when Daniel went into his house, and his windows were open in his chamber or dining-room, his usual oratory, and when he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed;† good expositors judge this to be family-prayer, being so obvious and discernible by his adversaries. However, that devout captain Cornelius, who feared God with all his house, prayed to God with his family, Acts x. 2, which he declares, saying, "I prayed in my house," ver. 30. Calvin observes, "That Cornelius instructs his family in the fear of God, contemning the fear of danger; for, the Jewish religion was then hateful, nor might a Roman espouse a strange religion; wherefore, although the sincere profession of the gospel is much decayed in the world, yet that fearfulness is too criminal, if on account of such unjust hatred, any one should not dare to dedicate or present his family as a sacrifice to God, by his pious instructions."‡ Thus Calvin.

* 1 Chron. xvi. 43. † Dan. vi. 10.

‡ Nec omittenda est circumstantia, quod familiam in Dei timore instituit, contempto periculi metu, quod inde instabat; valde enim exosa erat Judaica religio; nec impunè erat civi Romano, peregrinam, ut vocabant, religionem suscipere. Quare etsi hodiè, pessimé in mundo audit sincera evangelii professio, tamen nimis vitiosa est timiditas, si quem impediat injustum istud odium, ne suam familiam Deo audeat in sacrificium suâ piâ institutione offerre.—*Vid. Calv. in Act.* 10. 2.

6. Another argument for a family-altar is, that the providence of God calls for it: "God setteth the solitary in families," Psal. lxviii. 6. There is certainly a signal act of divine care in disposing men and women's affections to each other; to make a barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children: it was God that made houses for the God-fearing midwives. The Lord made Rachel and Leah to build the house of Israel: and why doth God make his David's a sure house?* Why doth God give servants? Is it only to gratify the flesh, or a fancy? Is it only for worldly profit? Is it not for religion's sake? Has God no higher end than most men have for worldly advantages or pleasure? Surely God puts persons into this relation for himself, who is the grand end of all his acts. He hath made all things for himself.† Should men then live like heathens and brutes? Do they not thereby counteract God's design? Doth God give wives and children to them that fear him, and doth he not expect that they should fear and serve him together?‡ If children be God's heritage, why should not we present them to the Lord upon our knees? If they be God's reward to us, why should we not give them again to God as our best reward?‖ If families are societies of divine institution, do they not need divine benediction? Should not persons carry on religion in a relative capacity? Yes, surely. When God sanctifies this relation by his appointment, should not men sanctify his name by setting up his ordinances? there is great reason for it: for every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.§ God's word to warrant our lawful use thereof, prayer for our holy

* Psal. cxiii. 9. Exod. i. 21. Ruth. iv. 11. 2 Sam. vii. 11.
† Prov. xvi. 4. ‡ Psal. cxxviii. 3, 4. ‖ Psal. cxxvii. 3.
§ 1 Tim. iv. 5.

and profitable use thereof. As men without both these cross God's design, so they have no due use of this sweet domestic constitution and relation.

7. This family-altar distinguisheth betwixt religious and profane families; this is one discriminating characteristic, the one calls on God, the other not: this is as the altar Ed, to testify to all the world a solemn owning of the true God. On the contrary, wicked persons are thus described, Deut. xxix. 18, "Lest there should be amongst you, man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God." Mind it, families in their domestic capacity, as well as in a personal, or national capacity may be alienated from God, and may have a root that beareth gall and wormwood, then see what follows: this is that which makes evil families, when instead of praying, reading scriptures, singing psalms, there is cursing, swearing, mocking at serious godliness, vain or profane talk, at least only worldly discourse.* But religious families are such as maintain God's worship according to God's institution, where the daily perfume of prayer ascends heavenwards. Mr. Fenner preaching at the funeral of a pious old man, disabled from work, and daily going among his friends for relief, saith, "O how much better was that poor cottage where he lived, whence the incense of prayer and praise mounted daily upwards; than the sumptuous palaces of princes and nobles, where oaths and blasphemies are belched out!" It was an appointment among the Jews and proselytes, that every family, province and city, should observe the feast of Purim, as a memorial of their deliverance from Haman's conspiracy;† and is there not as much reason that Christian families should celebrate the great work of redemption amongst them? Justin

* Jer. viii. 3. † Esth. ix. 27, 28.

Martyr tells us, that amongst the other characters of primitive Christians this was one, that they prayed fasting, before they commenced any work.* And having described the godly manners of ancient Christians, he adds, whoever live not as Christ taught, it is certain that they are not Christians, though they may profess it in words.†

8. Christian families are churches, and churches must have altars for God's worship. Luke informs us of the primitive church, that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer," Acts ii. 42. Breaking bread in the Lord's supper, is a public church ordinance, the other are also common to families, as well as christian assemblies. Families consist of individual persons, congregations of families, and the catholic churches of particular societies; and families may partake of the name, and must of the nature of churches.‡ What is a church but a religious society gathered for God's worship? The church was limited to families in the first ages of the world; thence it spread itself by divine grace into many streams, all proceeding from one spring as branches from one root, till the church became national. But families were the first original. Nor doth family religion cease when public assemblies are formed, Gen. iv. 26, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."‖ This text hath

* Just. Mart. Apol. Christ. ad Ant. Pium.

† At enim qui non ita vivere comperiuntur sicut ille docuit, certum est documentum non esse Christianos, quamvis id lingua profiteantur.

‡ Istæ enim congregationes sunt quasi partes similares ecclesiæ catholicæ, atque adeo, et nomen et naturam ejus participant.—*Ames. Med. Theo. lib.* 1. *c.* 32.

‖ Diu me torsit hic lotus, et etiamnum torquet.—*Vid. Pol. Crit. in locum.*

tortured interpreters; but this is clear, that calling on God's name is part of God's worship; that this piety was maintained in Seth's particular family; and possibly, in a little time men began more publicly to own God's worship when others did degenerate;* and hence the sons of God and of men were thereby distinguished; which confirms the former argument. But this is what I now say, that families are to be as churches. And some interpret those places, Rom. xvi. 5, "Greet the church in their house," and "church in thine house,"† to be no more than a private family. Grotius takes it for a domestic church, and saith, that three persons, though laymen, make a church.‡ Now wheret here is a house for God, it is a house of prayer. That is no church where there is no altar to God, but it is a synagogue of Satan. We cannot call every family a church, but a christian pious family; and it is so called by the analogy or resemblance it bears to a church, from the worship of God maintained therein. So then, without God's worship in your houses, you are not churches, and so not members of Christ, or of the catholic church of God; but in that respect as heathens.

9. Householders have a charge upon their hands, which they must give an account of, and opportunity to discharge this trust. Governors are charged with their families; hence the fourth commandment is given to them chiefly, that they should take care that their family should keep the Sabbath day: and hence the fifth command also is given to inferiors to obey their governors.‖ Yea, therefore are parents rewarded or punished in their children, according to the second commandment; because governors must account for

* Gen. vi. 2. † Col. iv. 15. Philem. 2.

‡ Ubi tres, licet laici, ibi ecclesia est. ‖ Exod. xx. 8—12.

their inferiors. God even orders householders to bring all under their roof, to the feast of weeks, with their free-will-offerings, Deut. xvi. 10, 11; and the feast of tabernacles, ver. 13, 14. Also, they were to bring their males yearly, three times in the year, ver. 16. And it is not for nothing that householders have this charge laid on them, because they have greater authority, and opportunity to bring them together for God's public worship in the family; for they may call them together upon natural and civil accounts, to eat, and to work, and why not to pray together? their command is a law. A master may say, "Give an account of thy stewarship,"* and why not of such a sermon? They may demand an account of their time and talents committed to their trust, and why not a reason of their hope, and an account of their piety or proficiency? why not call them to prayer? and indeed it is a debt due to men's children and servants. This is implied in Col. iv. 1, 2, "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal—" presently he adds, "continue in prayer;" intimating that prayer for, and with servants, is just and equal both upon their own and servants' account; it is as due as their promised wages. God makes masters as truly watchmen as ministers, and if they fail, God will require their blood at their hand.† Besides the advantages and conveniency of frequent intercourse, capacitates governors for this solemn exercise; and God will require an account of all these talents another day.

10. There are daily cases, occasions, and necessities that require families, to be presented to the Lord. There are family sins to be confessed, wants to be enumerated, mercies to be desired, cares and crosses to be removed, fears to be prevented, temptations to be

* Luke xvi. 2. † Ezek. iii. 18.

resisted, duties to be performed, graces to be exercised, peace to be maintained or regained, passions to be suppressed, mercies to be acknowledged; and all these must be laid at God's feet in daily prayer. That is a rare family which hath not some prodigal son, or carnal soul, as a member of it; some body sick in it, or some child to dispose of in marriage, or to employ in some occupation; some doubts or difficulties that call for prayer, wherein the whole family is concerned; or if there be no such exigency at present, yet who knows how soon any of these, or all these may light upon a family? and what remedy is there like family prayer? Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful in nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." This is a catholicon, a cure for all diseases, a salve for every sore. We find that when God afflicted Abimelech's family, Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed him, his wife, and maid servants, and they bare children. A Pharaoh will beg Moses's prayers for him in his affliction;* and oh what a woful state is that family in, which hath no body to speak a word to God for it, and with it, in domestic troubles! a child lies groaning, and the father cannot groan out a prayer; a servant is at the point of death, and the master hath no skill or disposition to bring him to Jesus for cure. Alas! that any should be so insensible of their wants, so ignorant of the means relief, or distrustful of the power of God, or efficacy of prayer. No family is above wants, therefore none should be without prayer; for prayer riseth from a sense of wants, which no person or family is without, either less or more, either in reality or in our perception.†

* Gen. xx. 17, 18. Exod. ix. 28.

† Deest semper quod petitur, vel ex toto, vel ex parte, vel in

11. The blessing of God usually attends family-altars: not as though God were tied to religious families, as heathens chained their idols, or as Eli's sons fancied God's presence necessarily attended the ark; but God usually visits pious families: scripture and experience testify this, "He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless them that fear the Lord both small and great;" that is, proselytes, Gentiles, converts. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous:"* our Lord loves to converse, where his children inhabit; it is true, he prefers public assemblies; "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob."† God loves to see his children together in his public worship. The greater the solemnity, if good, the more of God's Spirit and presence: but God doth not despise his children seeking him in families; when devout David sings of mercy and judgment to God, and behaves himself wisely in a perfect way, he cries out, "O when wilt thou come unto me?"‡ God's kind visits are worth the world, whether by way of providence, assistance, influence, or evidence. How often have God's children met with God in their families? Abraham had a promise of a child; Cornelius had a glorious vision of a holy angel; and our Lord came to Jairus's house, to raise his dead daughter.‖ How often hath God answered family-prayer? Even at present, by melting the hearts of children or servants! And afterwards: it is recorded of Mr. Banen, of Stepleford, that he seldom performed family-duty, but he had some answers of prayer to bless God for,

sese, vel in sensu nostro, vel denique quoad actum, vel quoad continuatam ejus durationem.—*Ames. Med. Theol. lib. ii. cap.* 8.

* Psal. cxv. 12, 13. cxviii. 15. † Psal. lxxxvii. 2.

‡ Psal. ci. 1, 2. ‖ Gen. xviii. 10. Acts x. 3. Luke viii. 41, 51.

since the former time of appearing there before God. It is a remarkable story that Polanus relates of an earthquake in the year 1584, in Berne, when a mountain violently hurried beyond other mountains, overturned a whole village of ninety houses and families, excepting half of one house, in which the father of the family, with his wife and children, were prostrate on their knees praying.* So true is that expression of Solomon, Prov. xii. 7, "The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand;" God blessed the habitation of the just.† He thinks fit sometimes to distinguish by his wise providence between the houses of the Israelites and Egyptians.‡ And experience doth daily show that the house is blessed where God is sincerely worshipped, as the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and his household, for receiving the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 11.

12. On the contrary, God curseth prayerless families. That is a prophecy as well as a prayer, Jer. x. 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." It is a dreadful prediction; for the wrath threatened, is not ordinary displeasure, but fury; anger boiled up to the highest degree of revenge; anger and fury are sometimes joined, and "when God deals in fury his eyes spare not, neither hath he pity;"‖ this is dreadful. And here also is the measure of it, "Pour out thy fury;" this denotes plenty, abundance, variety of sore judgments, not one or two, but multitudes of

* Anno autem 1584, terræ motu mons quidam in ditione Bernatum ultra alias montes violenter latus, pagum quendam nonaginta familias habentem contexit totum, dimidiâ domi exceptâ in qua paterfamilias cum uxore et liberis in genua provolutus Deum invocabat.—*Tolani Syntag. cap.* 22. *fol.* 301.

† Prov. iii. 33. ‡ Exod. xii. 13. ‖ Jer. vii. 20. Ezek. viii. 18.

plagues, like drops in a shower, or as flood-gates opened or a general inundation, spreading itself universally, poured out on children, young men, husband and wife, the aged with him that is full of days.* O what would become of England if this fury were as universal as the neglect of family duty!† This fury is also irresistible; it is like a descent from above, which can no more be stopped and avoided than the showers of rain;‡ there is no stopping those cataracts of heaven, no quenching this fire of fierce wrath against irreligious families, when the Lord renders his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.‖ But what is all this for? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? is it for idolatry, murder, drunkenness, blasphemy, or for some horrible, heinous crimes? no, it is for sins of omission, not knowing God, not calling on God's name. O miserable families where religion is not exercised, there these threatenings must be executed!

Object. But we see no such thing; prayerless families flourish, live joyously, have all things at command, prosper more than others, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.§

I must confess this promiscuous dispensation of providence, where wickedness is prosperous and holiness oppressed, hath been an offence to the godly, and a hardening to the wicked. And David himself was puzzled with it, till he went into the sanctuary, then he understood their end, and God's end in this.¶

But I answer, 1. Forbearance is no acquittance; a reprieve is no pardon. "Their foot shall slide in due time." God bears long with sinners for wise ends, till the vessels of wrath be fitted for destruction.** God

* Jer. vi. 11. † Isa. xxxiv. 2. ‡ Descensus à summis in imum.
‖ Isa. lxvi. 15. § Job xxi. 7—13. ¶ Psalm lxxiii. 17.
** Deut. xxxii. 35. Rom. ix. 22.

will be in some men's debt till another world. They shall have their good things here, and torments hereafter.* A wise man will choose his heaven hereafter, though he have a hell here.

2. Yet this curse and wrath upon wicked persons and prayerless families are secret and invisible; even in outward things, they may sow much, and bring in little; eat and not have enough. Yea, God curseth even the blessings of such as worship him not;† however, they have not a covenant right to what they do enjoy: it is not sanctified to them for their good; for the creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer;‡ but prayerless families have no outward comforts thus sanctified. Besides, the saddest invisible curse is upon their souls and spirits; a blind mind, a hard heart, a seared conscience, and a spirit of slumber, are the greatest judgments and fruits of God's heaviest fury, Rom. i. 26—28. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. It is a dreadful thing, when a "Lord, have mercy on them," is written upon men's doors, and they cannot read it, will not believe it, nor lay it to heart, Isa. xlii. 24, 25. This is next to Pharaoh's plague, and next door to hell. They that will not heed now, must feel this fury, and in the latter days shall consider it perfectly, read Jer. xxiii. 19, 20. Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Thus much for the reasons to prove that the erecting of family altars for God's worship is an important duty. The command of God, scripture types, natural religion, promises, prophecies, scripture examples, divine providence, discriminating character, families being christian churches, governors being accountable, the daily necessities of families, God's blessing on praying families, his curse and wrath upon prayerless families.

* Luke xvi. 25. † Hag. i. 6. Mal. ii. 2. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 5.

CHAP. IV.

OBJECTIONS MILITATING AGAINST FAMILY ALTARS PROPOSED AND ANSWERED.

But there is no truth so plain, no duty so good, but Satan can furnish a witty head, and wicked heart with plausible arguments against it. And it is strange if men have not something to say against this duty, which apparently tends to undermine Satan's kingdom.

Object. 1. Had family prayer been a duty, we had found it expressly commanded in scripture, but we find it not in any express precept.

Ans. (1.) Where find you infant baptism expressly commanded in the new testament? yet it is plain by necessary consequence, so is this. Circumcision was commanded, there is the like reason for baptism, both are plain to all but wayward spirits. I hinted before that regular consequence is strong argument.

(2.) Let not proud reason dictate to the wise God how he must speak. General rules laid down in scripture are to be applied to particular cases, according to circumstances. If God say, men must provide for their families, he leaves it to their discretion, what kind of meat, clothes, lodgings, or callings they provide. God bids us pray without ceasing, in all places, in every kind of prayer, and leaves it to prudence for particular places, times, words, and associates, so that it answer the main end of God's glory, communion with him, and edification. Let not captious wits raise disputes to make void the substance of a duty, because the circumstance is not expressed. God gives laws to rational creatures, and indulgeth us so far as to leave us to our

liberty in mutable circumstances, except expressly prescribed.

Object. 2. Jesus Christ prayed not with his family, yet he is the best pattern: if he had prayed with them constantly, they would have learned from him, but they wanted to be taught, Luke xi. 1.

Ans. (1.) Christ's case and ours are far different; what was suitable to his disciples, was not proper for him; he needed not for himself to confess sin, ask forgiveness, beg mortification, increase of grace or assurance: so that it was not necessary that he should ordinarily be their mouth.

(2.) Yet scripture silence is no good argument. And their desire of instruction in prayer is no proof that he prayed not with them; for prayer is a personal duty, and our Lord could not be always with them. And yet we find our Lord did occasionally pray with his family: in expressing gratitude, Matt. xi. 25, 26; on working miracles, Matt. xiv. 19; at the holy supper, Luke xxii. 19; and we have his long and last prayer uttered with his disciples, John xvii. In all which he spake what was proper to him as God-man, and our mediator; and herein he is an excellent pattern to all householders.

Object. 3. "The sacrifice of the wicked, (and so his prayer) is an abomination to the Lord."* How can you then direct them to pray when most of them are bad?

Ans. (1.) God loseth not his authority to command, because man hath lost his capacity to obey; it is his duty still, though he cannot perform it in such a due manner as God requires. He is bound to pray as a creature though he cannot do it as a child: better do it as men can, than not do it at all; prayer is a natural

* Prov. xv. 8.

duty. The Ninevites must cry aloud, and mightily to God, and it was not in vain :* Simon Peter bids Simon Magus pray, though in the gall of bitterness.†

(2.) We must distinguish betwixt a wilful and a returning sinner: we bid not a thief pray that he may meet with a booty, that is abominable; or men "regarding iniquity in their hearts:" but in a complex sense we bid them "turn from their evil ways, and so pray."‡ Prayer must be joined with repentance; as prayer is a means of carrying the heart to God in worship, so it is a means to obtain grace.‖ Prayer is the soul's motion God-ward, desire is the soul of prayer, and who dares to say to the wicked, desire not God, Christ, faith? By praying, men may learn to pray aright, "for God gives his holy Spirit to them that ask him."§

Object. 4. There are wicked children or servants in the family, how dare we join with them? For whose sake God may justly reject us.

Answ. (1.) If the praying governor be a really religious character and pray aright, he need not fear non-acceptance: Christ was heard in his prayer, though Judas was present. What think you of poor ministers' prayers in mixed congregations?¶ certainly the presence of unworthy persons prejudiceth not the reception of sincere worshippers.

(2.) Prayer is God's institution to make bad good, some have been much wrought upon by prayers of others, God in time heard Stephen for Paul, if it advantaged not at present. Mr. Weemse said of Mr. Bruce, he brought down the Holy Ghost upon us all. Deny them not this means of conversion.

* Jonah iii. 8. † Acts viii. 22. ‡ Psal. lxvi. 18. Isa. lv. 6, 7.
‖ Medium cultus, so it is medium gratiæ. § Luke xi. 13.
¶ Acts xxvii. 35.

Object. 5. This setting up of a family-altar for such constant prayer savours of forms, and will fill the country with formalists and hypocrites.

Answ. (1.) Forms in themselves as forms are not condemned, but forms only, wanting the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Our business is not to make hypocrites but converts: by form is meant a mask, vizor, or appearance opposed to substance and reality. But we persuade and direct to sincerity, as to principle, manner and end of religious exercises.

(2.) But a form of godliness is better than none at all: men cannot have the power of godliness without the form, no more than you can have the kernel without the shell. He that prays doth something towards duty, but he that refuseth to worship God at all, bids open defiance to God's commanding authority, and saith, I scorn to bow so much as a knee to God in prayer. This is a presumptuous sin: "The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God."* Let him answer it as he dare. The text saith, 1 Tim. iv. 8, "Bodily exercise profiteth little," πρὸς ὀλίγον for a little, that is, for a little time; or for a little, that is, in some outward respects, as in Ahab's fasting though it reach not so far as the eternal salvation of the immortal soul:† however this is better than a total neglect.

Object. 6. But such kind of praying morning and evening is a stinting of the Spirit, a limiting of God to man's time, when the Spirit moves not to it.

Answ. (1.) Christ and his apostles had set times for prayer; Jesus oft times resorted to the garden, Judas knew his stated hour and place, John xviii. 2. "And the apostles had an hour of prayer," Acts iii. 1. Was this stinting the Spirit? Indeed this objection is

* Psalm x. 4. † 1 Kings xxi. 29.

levelled against preaching, singing, the Lord's supper, and all stated ordinances, how do men know that the Spirit will move at such a season?

(2.) It is one thing to stint, another to lie in the way of the Spirit: men are bound to wait at the posts of wisdom's doors, and are blessed, and in the road of further blessing;* for the wind of the Spirit bloweth where and when it listeth:† and nobody will say he limits the wind who waits in the haven for a fair gale to waft him forward. Besides, God expects that men should stir up themselves to take hold of him.‡ Self-excitation is God's appointment to get the heart into a good frame. How often doth David begin low and end high? We must stir up the gift of God in our hearts.‖ A dead, dull, senseless heart is no supersedeas from duty: omission upon indisposition doth but harden the heart, indispose still more for duty, and gratify Satan, yea, and displease God.

Object. 7. This family-prayer is but a singular invention of brain-sick novellists, not used of old, and is more ado than needs.

Answ. (1.) In scripture-times it was used, and in the purest primitive times. Basil saith, that Christians made haste to prayers by day-break in the morning:§ Chrysostom saith we go not from table to bed, but to prayers, lest we be more brutish than brutes. It were easy to produce instances from Cyprian, Augustin, &c. of early Christians being frequent in prayers. You will say, but these were the prayers of churches? I answer: churches were mostly then in houses, yet some instances prove also daily family prayer: and godly persons in all ages have used it.

(2.) Can men be too devout? Doth not our Lord

* Prov. viii. 34. † John iii. 8. ‡ Isa. lxiv. 7. ‖ 2 Tim. i. 6.
§ Mane orto die, in precationes properare.

say, "One thing is needful; seek first the kingdom of God; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, and strength."* Can you do too much for God? Can you be too oft with God? Alas! you cannot be over much righteous in the internal exercises of religion:† no, nor the external, as long as you keep to commanded duties, and one duty does not cross another: nay, when we have done all that is commanded, still we are unprofitable servants;‡ we have but done our duty. It was Judas that said, "wherefore is this waste?"‖ Pious souls still complain of defects. Whom have you heard complain on their death-bed that they had served God too much, or been too religious?

Object. 8. They are no better than others that pray in their families; they can lie, cheat, be covetous, proud, passionate, censorious, and hard-hearted.

Answ. (1.) Take heed what you say; act not the devil's part, to be false-accusers, taking up a false report, or without proof. It is well known, that now-a-days, if persons be strict and serious in religious duties, many pick quarrels with them, take advantage against them, aggravate their faults; these men's motes are beams, yea mountains; this sect is every where spoken against;§ there needs no further jury to try them; but if they be praying persons, they are hypocrites, as if piety were a characteristic of hypocrisy. The Lord rebuke thee, O diabolist! judge charitably till you know the truth; you may wrong them, as primitive Christians were wronged.

(2.) Suppose they do transgress and miscarry; alas! they are but men. Thus the angel excused honest Joshua, when Satan accused him: "Is not this a brand

* Luke x. 42. Matt. vi. 33. xxii. 37. † Eccles. vii. 16.
‡ Luke xvii. 10. ‖ John xii. 3—5. § Acts xxviii. 22.

plucked out of the fire?"* Alas! he smells of Babylon too much; but may not such be upright for the main? and how will God take it if you slander his children? But suppose it be true that they are faulty, doth their religion teach them so? Is this the fault of their praying, or not praying aright? Is it because they are too religious, or defective in it? No, say you, they are hypocrites; but if they who are so devout prove so, what will become of you, that are so far short of them? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall you appear?†

Object. 9. We pray in public and secret, is not that sufficient? what needs family-prayer too? surely God never required so much a-do.

Answ. (1.) One duty cannot supersede another: these are distinct parts of the same duty. Religion must be carried on in all places and relative circumstances; husband and wife must pray together;‡ and even neighbours must call to each other, and say, come, come, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.‖ Think not then to put off God with one sort of religiousness, you must be holy in all manner of conversation, in every turn, turn you which way you will, to your general or particular calling, to a single or married state, to solitariness or company;§ you must still take your religion with you, and practise it as a member of a church or family.

(2.) It is very doubtful whether those worship God sincerely in public, or at all in their closets, who worship not God in and with their families. It was the saying of Lactantius, "that is no true religion which men leave behind them at church."¶ Men may make

* Zech. iii. 2. † 1 Pet iv. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 7.
‖ Zech. viii. 21. § 1 Pet. i. 15. Εν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ.
¶ Non est vera religio quæ cum templo relinquitur.

a shift to serve God as others do, at church, for vain-glory, or ostentation, and pretend secret prayer merely for an evasion; but family-prayer will try whether they worship God sincerely or not: men see the former, but know not the latter.

Object. 10. None of my neighbours use it, if I pray in my family I shall be singular.

Answ. (1.) Wouldst thou choose rather to follow a multitude in evil to hell, than travel with a few to heaven?* Our Lord saith, "What do you more than others?"† Or what singular thing do you? Are you content to fare as the most fare? Will you rush with the herd into the deep, and perish for company's sake? Is that good-fellowship which ends in the sad reckoning another day? Christ's flock is a little flock. But read Matt. vii. 13, 14, and consider whether you will choose.

(2.) If you have not the greater, you have the better company to travel with. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, ministers, confessors, Christians, have all travelled in this road: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee."‡ Methinks you should rather choose to be companions of the excellent, whom God will own when he makes up his jewels;|| than those atheists that say, it is in vain to serve God.

Object. 11. But I know some strict professors that use not to pray in their families, nay, that plead against it.

Ans. (1.) That is no part or evidence of their goodness. I deny not but some godly persons may for a season live in the omission of some duties, either through want of information, or their own sloth, or

* Exod. xxiii. 2. † Matt. v. 47.
‡ Psal. xxxii. 6. || Psal. xvi. 3. Mal. iii. 14, 17.

through false teachers, and the power of delusion; this is a temptation, but free grace will recover them, and the new nature within them will incline them to their duty, when they are convinced of it, and when they come to themselves.

(2.) Some professors, however, seem good that are not so; they may have a name to live, and yet be dead;* all is not gold that glitters; men may have the face, but not the frame or heart of Christians. How many make a fair show in the flesh, and account themselves the only saints, and are so esteemed by others, but are not owned by the Lord?† the complexion of a saint is one thing, but the constitution of a child of God is another. Some notionists spread their sails, and think themselves wronged if they be not called the godly party; but herein they are proved rotten, by casting off some precious truths and necessary duties; imitate such at your peril; a sincere saint hath respect to all God's commandments. ‡

Object. 12. We have scoffers in our families, that will withdraw, and not join, but mock; it may be a son, or wife will be doing something else at that time, and this will breed confusion, and do hurt.

Ans. (1.) But who is master, thou or they? If thou hast lost thy governing power, be ashamed of it, and resume thy authority. Whose cause dost thou manage, God's, or the devil's? If the cause be God's, in the name and strength of God own it, and he will stand by thee; fear not man in the way of duty. It was thy carelessness to join thyself to an untamed heifer, or to admit an unruly servant into thy family; add not rebellion to that sin; be humbled, and reform.

(2.) Had never any of God's children profane individuals in their family? Abraham had a persecuting Ishmael;

* Rev. iii. 1. † Gal. vi. 12. ‡ Psalm cxix. 6.

Isaac a profane Esau; David a scoffing Michal; what did they? did they give over praying? no, they prayed more fervently; "O that Ishmael may live in thy sight!" David was so far from ceasing his devotion, that Michal's scorn was as oil to inflame his zeal;* "I will yet," saith he, "be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight;" if they account it sordid baseness, I account it my chief honour to humble myself before the Lord. And which, think you, is more likely to win and work upon your carnal, scornful relations? a total omission, or a vigorous performance of family duty? I am sure a laborious charity is better than contemptuous withdrawing, and is usually blessed with success; however it is a means to proceed in order.

Object. 13. I am bashful, modest, and of weak gifts, and cannot venture to pray before others; I shall but betray my ignorance.

Ans. (1.) Canst thou act a master's part in other cases, and not in this? who commands thy servants to work? or who instructs them in their calling, or chides them when they displease thee? they shall hear from thee if they do wrong; and canst thou not speak to God before them? Cursed is that modesty that is ashamed of duty. Hast thou not reason to fear Christ will be ashamed of thee?† is not this for God's cause? deny him at your peril, he will deny you.‡

(2.) Are not all in your family, underlings or subordinate to you? have not you authority over them, to enjoin them silence and reverence? if you have lost your authority by your ignorance and childishness, thank yourselves. "Those that honour God, he will honour;" but departing out of God's ways, renders

* Gen. xvii. 18. 2 Sam. vi. 20—22. † Matt. x. 33.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

men contemptible and base.* It is grace and holiness that must recover your credit. But I know the reason why you will not pray: it is because you think you cannot do so well as others, or to get applause; this is your pride. But if you would shame yourselves, and do your best, God would provide for your credit; gifts would increase.

Object. 14. But I am poor and there is an unfeeling world, we work hard and cannot spare time; I have a great family and charge to maintain.

Ans. (1.) Dost not thou and thy family spend as much time in idle talk, sports, needless visits, sitting by the fire, as this would come to? None so hard set in their callings, but they might redeem half an hour in the morning, and more at night;† even though it were from sleep, for God's service, if they had a heart for God. Conscience will tell thee, thou spendest more time, that might be better employed; but a heart is wanting.

(2.) It is a usual saying, Meat and matins hinder no work; there is great truth in it. Prayer expedites business, for it obtains a blessing from God. Eliezer, Abraham's servant prayed, and God prospered his journey. You are atheists if you think work stands during prayer time; no, no, it makes whatsoever you take in hand to prosper.‡ The poor man cried to Mr. Carter, Sir, I work hard and fare ill, and thrive not; he answered, Work hard, and pray hard, and see what that will do.

Object. 15. But saith the man who is rich and thriving in the world, my hands are so full of business, and chapmen or customers come so fast, or I have to go abroad in my calling, that I cannot get time for prayer.

* 1 Sam. ii. 30. Mal. ii. 8, 9. † Eph. v. 16. ‡ Psal. i. 3.

Ans. (1.) I shall to this give the same answer that Mr. Ignatius Jurdan gave to a shopkeeper in London, accounted religious, being very busy in his shop early in the morning, Mr. Jurdan taking him aside, said, "Sir, I perceive you are very busy; do you keep up the trade of religion in all this throng;" he answered, "I hope I do;" Aye, but saith he, "do you visit God in your closet and family, morning and evening?" he replied, "In the evening, I pray constantly with my family, but in the morning, sometimes customers come and hinder us;" Mr. Jurdan said, "I tell you, I would throw these goods into the channel, or set fire to them, rather than they should hinder me in my course of devotion, or in the way to heaven." So say I; sirs, do you prize gain above godliness? then you are none of God's servants, but the world's slaves. Say not, it is for a time, one neglect brings on another, and thy heart will be more hardened; and by missing one season of communion with God, you lose more than all your estates are worth. Are you content, that the world be your portion? O make not gain your godliness!

(2.) How can you expect your gains and riches should be blessed to you, when you take not God's way to obtain a blessing? If you begin not with God, the end will be dreadful; God's curse is in the house of such wicked persons.* However, such treasures of wickedness profit nothing;† and since you will be rich you fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts which will drown you in destruction and perdition.‡ Do not you know that worldly riches cannot satisfy? Consider, the more you get of the world, the more difficult is your journey to heaven, and the greater your account.

* Prov. iii. 33. † Prov. x. 2. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

Object. 16. You bind us to a tedious bondage, this is a wearisome task to pray with our families morning and evening, it is not to be endured.

Answ. (1.) It is a sign of a carnal heart to be weary of duty: a gracious soul thankfully accepts the offer of frequent approaching to God: "Then," saith David, "will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy: it is good for me to draw nigh to God."* This is the height of a Christian's preferment, the sweetest recreation, and the only gainful employment. "To them that love God his commands are not grievous;" but these ways of wisdom are not only pleasant, but pleasantness.† Alas, sirs, what spirits are you of, that you can say, "What a weariness is it?"‡ Surely heaven itself would be your hell, unless your hearts and natures were changed.

(2.) It is an awful token of God's rejecting that man, and of that man's forsaking the Lord, who will rather pick quarrels with divine commands than obey them: remember what became of them that said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it? They went back and walked no more with Christ."‖ It is a sign thou takest thy religion for low and base ends, and when those ends are attained, then farewell Christ: and oh, the wretched end of forlorn apostates, whither wilt thou go for a better master, where wilt thou find a better service? wilt thou prefer Satan's drudgery to God's service, which is perfect freedom?§ Ah, sinner, thou hast the black brand of reprobation upon thee, and shalt be filled with thy own ways.¶

Object. 17. Saith one, I never used this family

* Psal. xliii. 4. lxxiii. 28. † 1 John v. 3. Prov. iii. 17.
‡ Mal. i. 13. ‖ John vi. 60—66. § John xii. 26.
¶ Prov. xiv. 14.

prayer and have been a housekeeper for twenty, thirty, or forty years, I am therefore loth to bring up a new custom, or condemn my former practices.

Answ. (1.) Custom in sin, or sinful negligence doubles the sin, and hardens the heart, Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin—then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." What think you, is it an extermination or aggravation of a fault to plead custom? Will the thief say to the judge, my lord, I have been so accustomed to stealing that I cannot leave it? Oh, say not, I will go to hell because I have travelled in the road thither all my days, and am loth to change.——

(2.) Converting grace can break off a bad custom, sanctifying work will turn an old stream into a new channel, or rather renew the soul's faculties and make a new creature, or creation; "Old things pass away, and behold all things are become new;"* new principles, motives, rule, and end. You are not true Christians, if you be not new creatures; and if you be not found in Christ, you are lost for ever.† You had need pray and pray again for new covenant-mercy, "That God would give you a new heart, and a new spirit—that you may walk in his statutes."‡ Be not content with the "old man," that corrupt, disfigured image of old Adam, but "put on the new man," that will make you capable of new acts, in a new manner. Better late than never: be not wedded to old traditions.‖

Object. 18. I have used it formerly, but got no good by it, and so gave it over; and if I begin again, I doubt I shall not hold out.

Answ. (1.) Whose fault was that? Was it God's fault or thine? The blame must not be laid on the

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Phil. iii. 9. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.
‖ Eph. iv. 22—24.] Pet. i. 18.

duty but on the person. Thousands have got good by it, and would not lay it aside for all the world's wealth. If thy heart had been right, thou wouldst have held on thy way; if thy hands had been clean thou wouldst have become stronger and stronger.* Alas, that thou shouldst lose thy reward, by losing what thou hast wrought:† poor soul, thou hast run in vain, all thy labour is lost, thy former righteousness shall not be mentioned for thee, but against thee.‡

(2.) Who persuaded thee to leave off family prayer? You did run well, who hindered you? Not God or his ministers; this persuasion cometh not of him that called you.‖ No, no, it was the devil and a wicked heart that bewitched you. And is it not egregious folly, "having begun in the spirit, to think to be made perfect by the flesh?"§ Will you go out of God's blessing into the warm sun? "What iniquity have you found in God or in his ways?"¶ Oh gratify not the devil and flesh, by saying, "It is in vain to serve God; or, why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"** Come, sirs, renew your old acquaintance, "Return to your first husband;"†† renew your ancient convictions and impressions; engage the strength of God and you shall hold on.

Object. 19. I like not this preciseness, you shall never persuade me to it; you spend your breath in vain, yet I hope to be saved, as well as the best of you all; God is merciful.

Answ. (1.) Now flesh and blood and carnal reason speak out, and vent the natural malignity of the heart, "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."‡‡

* Job xvii. 9. † 2 John 8. ‡ Ezek. xviii. 24.
‖ Gal. v. 7, 8. § Gal. iii. 1—3. ¶ Jer. ii. 5. Mal. iii. 14.
** 2 Kings vi. 33. †† Hos. ii. 7. ‡‡ Rom. viii. 7.

Oh, that any of God's creatures should spit such venom against its Maker! How far are you from the blessed Paul, who, when God called him by his grace, "conferred not with flesh and blood."* Will you ask the devil's advice whether to be God's children or not? Will you not serve God without the devil's leave? Well go on gratifying God's enemy, and see the issue, it will be bitterness in the end.

(2.) Will you dare to stand by this answer at God's bar and great tribunal? Will you then dare to say, Lord, thou didst indeed bid us pray, but we had no mind to that duty; we loved not thee, nor did we approve of thy ways; we thought they were too strict, and bound us too strait; we had more inclination for our carnal ease, and sensual lusts; we were latitudinarians, and our resolution was, we will not have this man to rule over us, whatever it cost us?† Well, sirs, think not much if God say, "You have set at nought all my counsel and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity: you thought I was altogether such a one as yourselves, but I will reprove you.‡ Now is the day of vengeance, mercy hath an end, and justice takes place; "and those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me."‖

Object. 20. Well, now I am convinced prayer is a duty, family prayer is my duty, and I have a mind to perform it; but I know not how to manage it, I am altogether a stranger to it, God help me, I am a mere ignoramus, and know not what to say.

Answ. (1.) Where is the fault? Hast thou not enjoyed means, helps, ordinances many years for the good of thy soul? Dost thou not see others as igno-

* Gal. i. 16.
† Luke xix. 14.
‡ Prov. i. 25, 26. Psal. l. 21.
‖ Luke xix. 27.

rant as thou, attain to excellent gifts, under the same helps, who can pray very pertinently, even extempore; but I guess the true cause; it is either the pride of thy heart, that thou canst not pray so well as others, or it is thy sloth, in consequence of which thou hast not diligently used means to get knowledge or excite thy faculties: thy sloth will slay thy soul;* and thy damnation will be just.

(2.) God stands not upon gifts, elocution, or ready utterance; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; "a broken and a contrite heart, God will not despise."† If thou hast not precious liquor, canst thou not offer him thy empty bottles? If thou canst not pray, canst thou not fall down upon thy knees and tell God thou canst not pray? Canst thou not desire him to help thee to pray? Canst thou not say, as much as the poor publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."‡ If it be not wilfulness but weakness, God will indulge thee much, his Spirit will help thy infirmities,‖ both what to say, and how to pray. But in this case I shall give some directions shortly.

CHAP. V.

NEGLECT OF FAMILY WORSHIP, AN EVIL OF A THREATENING DESCRIPTION AND GREATLY TO BE LAMENTED.

THE first use I shall make of this subject is of lamentation, and severe admonition. If it be so, as I have proved, that governors should act the part of priests

* Prov. i. 32. † Psal. li. 17. ‡ Luke xviii. 13. ‖ Rom. viii. 26.

to erect altars for the worship of God in their families; then I doubt there is reason for alarm to many thousand families in England, for I fear God's vengeance is hanging over their heads. God looks and expects, that in a professing kingdom, a nation where the gospel has been so long acknowledged by public authority, religion would be more respected and practised in families, than I fear it is; God may justly wonder, "That there is no intercessor"; therefore how justly may he put on "garments of vengeance," and repay recompence to these islands.* Woe is us that there are so few serious, gracious families to be found in our highly favoured land. Religion runs at a low ebb, serious devotion is banished from among us. Some families are *without priests, without altars, without sacrifice*, or *offer the sacrifice of devils*, instead of God's, or along with his. On these a few observations may be made.

1. There are many houses without priest, that is, where the governor of the family hath no religion, is not devoted to God, nor anointed with his Spirit, nor consecrated to be a gospel priest to erect an altar or offer sacrifice. A poor irreligious master of a family, that knows not how to frame for† God's worship, alas, ignorant creature! he is not capable of speaking a word from God to his family, or of speaking a word to God for them. You go to bed and rise, one time after another, prayerless;‡ you can keep them up late and call them up early to their work, but never say, come to prayer; not a word of God all the day long, not a chapter read, not a psalm sung, not a prayer put up in the family from day to day; nay, it is well if there be any solemn praying for a blessing at meat, or giving God thanks for meat, but scholar's

* Isaiah lix. 16—18. † To set about. ‡ Psalm cxxvii. 2.

grace, as they say; every one for himself; so they sit down and rise up like brutes; at best, they fall to, saying, *God bless my meat, amen*: and so put off God with a compliment. Ah graceless master, ah graceless family! woe be to thee.

(1.) How durst you marry, set up a house, or take the charge of a family upon you, when you are no better furnished for it? Do you not shame with yourselves, that you cannot say a word to God for them? No, not if your wife, child, or servant lie a dying, and their souls ready to be lost, you have not a word to speak for their recovery or salvation, O wretched situation!

(2.) Do you not condemn yourselves, that can teach your children and servants a trade to get a livelihood by, and live handsomely in this world, and not one word for another world? you command them to work, never to worship God; you quarrel with them for offending you, never for offending God; you expect them to ask you for what they need, but you will not ask any thing of God either for them, or yourselves.

(4.) Are you not worse than idolatrous Micah, Judg. xvii. 5, "He had a house of gods, and made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest." Much like some ignorant parents that will set a lad to say a primer grace; better so than none at all. But Micah was not content with that, but got a hedge-hog priest, a wandering Levite to perform divine service in his family; and now he is a jolly fellow, and thus boasts, ver. 13, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." This poor idolater will rise up in judgment against thee.

(4.) How will you answer the charge against you? do not your children cry out, O pity us, pray for us,

cruel parents? you brought us sinful creatures into a sinful world, help us out of this woful state! But alas! you have not a word to say for them, or with them; you regard their precious souls no more than an ox or horse; their blood will be required at your hands. How will they curse you in hell? their language will be, Oh, woe is me! had I lived in a praying family, I might have been converted and saved; I never heard a word of God except blaspheming his name. How will this grind your ears, and grieve your hearts another day!

2. Other families are without an altar; have not so much as a form of godliness; not so much as a show of religion. Oh! that it should be said of many houses in England, as of Israel, 2 Chron. xv. 3, "Now for a long season Israel had been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law." So God threatens in Hos. iii. 4, that the wretched Jews shall be without any religion true or false, as it hath been since their murdering Christ to this day.

(1.) How these wretches resemble the brutes? they own God no more than a dog or an ass; it would be better to be a brute, than to be compared to a brute. Yea God calls in the dullest creatures to condemn an irreligious people.*

(2.) How can you expect a blessing upon your mercies? they are unhallowed things as to you; nay, they are accursed to you, and, if God give commission, will rise up in rebellion against you; you have not sanctified your house, so it is not estimated as yours.†

(3.) You hinder God's interest in the world, and do what you can to propagate irreligion to future generations; how will they plead the practice of ancestors? My father never prayed in his family, nor will I.

* Isa. i. 3. Jer. viii. 7, 8. † Lev. xxvii. 14.

Omission is a trade soon learned, with difficulty rooted out. Jeroboam made Israel sin many generations after.* Oh! you little know how far your sin may spread.

(4.) Do you not often read your sin in the punishment of it? When you are atheists in not worshipping God, your children are atheists in denying God; you are defective in duty, they abound in iniquity; you pray not for them, God rejects them, and leaves them to notorious villanies, to be punished by the judges; or God strikes them with some overwhelming judgment, as he did Eli's sons. This will make thy heart ache, and call thy sins to remembrance.

3. Some families possibly have a priest, and an altar, but want a sacrifice. As Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"† So say I, here are materials, the outward form, but where is the marrow, and mystery of true godliness? Dost thou give up thy soul and body as a living sacrifice to God? Dost thou bring a broken and contrite heart for sin?‡ Dost thou practically obey divine commands, and do all the good thou canst in thy place?‖ especially dost thou take Jesus Christ in the arms of thy faith, and expect acceptance only in the Beloved?§ or dost thou only compliment God?

(1.) If there be not a principle of grace within, thou art but a lifeless machine, like a parrot that speaks articulately without sense and feeling: David's prayer went not out of feigned lips, why so? he had found in his heart to pray his prayer;¶ mind it, thou must find thy prayer in thy heart, before thou utter it with thy lips, and then thou must pray a prayer; and not

* 1 Kings xiv. 16. † Gen. xxii. 7. ‡ Rom. xii. 1. Ps. li. 17.
‖ Heb. xiii. 16. § Heb. xiii. 10. Eph. i. 6.
¶ Psalm xvii. 1. 2 Sam. vii. 27.

only say a prayer as most do. Some will go down on their knees and patter over a few words in a heartless manner, when their minds are roving to a thousand trifles; and this is their devotion of which they brag, and with which God must be pleased; whereas it is a poor heartless, lifeless, spiritless form, without power, which God rejects; this lip labour is but lost labour; for it is a mocking of God, and he will not be mocked.*

(2.) If you sleepily, sluggishly, or unseasonably perform your family duties, you will come short of approbation. Some spend all the day, and the evening in work or worldly business; part, it may be in idle chat and vain discourse, and just when they are for going to bed, start up and fall on their knees, and rattle over a few words between sleeping and waking: and most of the family fitter for their beds than for devotion. Alas! sirs, doth not God pronounce a curse upon such as do the work of the Lord negligently?† and doth not God say, "Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing?"‡ Ah! soul, hadst thou not a male, a better, fitter hour in thy power, than that sleepy hour at bed-time? must God be put off with the world's leavings? doth not he that gives thee all thy time deserve the best? doth not God bid thee seek first his kingdom? and shall this be last? must the very flower and cream of thy time be spent in vanity, and God be thus served? O! be ashamed and blush at thy disingenuous dealing with the Almighty.

(3.) If you come to own God in family exercises, by fits and starts, in a good mood, or when some affliction lies on you, or your family, oh how slavish are you? but alas! there are some that are never thoughtful, but

* 2 Tim. iii. 5. Isa. xxix. 13. Gal. vi. 7.
† Jer. xlviii. 10. ‡ Mal. i. 14.

in distress; never serious, but when severely handled, like a dog under the cudgel, and then it is but howling,* not child-like crying; "in their afflictions they will seek God early" and earnestly, they pour out a prayer when his chastening is upon them,† and never else. Poor souls, should you not come to the throne of grace, "to find grace to help in time of need?" ‡ and when is the day, where is the place, and what is the state wherein you have not need of God? are you not daily sinning, and need pardon as well as daily bread? may you not die this day, this night? are not morning and evening proper times to seek God? Some will not pray in their families, but a little on sabbath nights, when they have nothing else to do: as though all time were not God's, week-days as well as Lord's-days. Surely God is to be owned daily; "I will," said David, "daily perform my vows," and "I cry unto thee daily:" ‖ and why should you be as "the morning cloud and early dew," § when God is daily furnishing you with his benefits, and therefore should be daily praised, not Lord's day merely, but week-day, and every day in the week: ¶ what if God forget or forsake you any day, what would become of you?

(4.) If you are wrong in the end of your family duties you will be rejected; and, alas! thousands propose wrong ends to themselves, in this as in other exercises of religion: some keep up family duty, because it was the custom of their ancestors, and it would be a kind of disparagement to degenerate; some to gratify a religious wife, or pious servant; some to make a show and ostentation of their gifts; others to stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience; some for worldly

* Hos. vii. 14.
‡ Heb. iv. 16.
§ Hos. vi. 4.
† Hos. v. 15. Isa. xxvi. 16.
‖ Psalm lxi. 8. lxxxvi. 3.
¶ Psalm lxviii. 19. lxxii. 15.

gain; others as the Pharisees to be seen of men; nay, it is well if some pray not for a cloak of their villany, when they devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers;* long prayers are nōt simply condemned in themselves, for it is a sign of rare piety, the more holy men are, the more prayerful.† But, oh! damnable hypocrisy, to make so holy an ordinance truckle to such a degrading vice: it is well if that wickedness be dead and buried with the Pharisees: of whom Calvin saith, their assiduous praying was a kind of stalking-horse, or occasion to serve their filthy lucre, neither did they sell their prayers otherwise than mercenary men dispose of their day labours.‡

For (saith this prince of interpreters) "Where gain is gotten by such designing prayers, the more the fervour of that kind of devotion increaseth, the more is the name of God profaned." I beseeech you therefore tremble to think of prostituting so glorious an exercise to so ignominious an end: for the end makes or mars an action.

4. As some families are without priest, altar, and sacrifice of the right kind, so there are some that have something of all these, yet have another altar and sacrifice inconsistent with these, that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham:‖ that set up the devil's altar by the Lord's; as of the Samaritans of old, it is said in one verse "they feared the Lord," in the

* Mal. vi. 5. Matt. xxiii. 14.

† Nam quo quisque sanctior est, precandi studio magis est deditus.

‡ Quia illis precandi assiduitas turpis lucri sit aucupium; neque enim aliter preces vendebant, quam mercenarii diurnas operas locant.—*Calv. in loc.*—quod reŝ per se laudabilis in pravum finem conversa est; nam ubi ex conductitiis precibus, captatur quæstus, quo magis crescit fervidæ (ut loquuntur) devotionis species, eo magis profanatur Dei nomen.—*Id. Ibid.*

‖ Zeph. i. 5.

next verse "they feared not the Lord," why so? the answer is put between them, they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, 2 Kings, xvii. 32—34, that is, they did materially do the same things in worship that Israel did, for fear of being destroyed by the lions, ver. 25, but they had gods of their own, ver. 29, and God could not endure this mongrel religion, and interprets it to be no true fear, or due worship of himself: for God will not be partner with idols, he only must be served or not at all. Our Lord takes it ill when men set their thresholds by his thresholds, their posts by his posts,* thus they defile his holy name by their abominations: these are a grievous nuisance to the holy and jealous God. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? Can men serve God and mammon?† Must Bacchus, Venus, Vulcan, be set up cheek by jole with the living and true God? Shall wickedness be practised by governors, tolerated in inferiors; swearing, cursing, lying, cheating, drunkenness, uncleanness, mocking at strickness of religion?

Observe it, there is no true worship where there is not strict discipline. How sad is it to see some men devout in worship and profligate in practice? one thing on their knees, another on their feet.: pray like angels, and practise like devils: confess sin one hour, and commit it the next: plead for pardon, and to obtain a dispensation. Alas! that any now-a-days should resemble Israel of old, who would steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely; and come and stand before God in his house, to worship and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations:"‡ or like the impudent woman, Prov. vii. 14, "I have peace-offerings with me, this day have I paid my vows." So some men think they may do as they list, and cast the reins

* Ezek. xliii. 8. † Psal. xciv. 20. ‡ Jer. vii. 9—11.

on the neck of appetite to run to all licentiousness: why so? Have they no religion? Yes, they have said their prayers, and are in good reputation for religion, and since they have been so serious, now they hope God will not take notice of their infirmities, but overlook them, as the man Mr. Shepherd tells of, that frequented taverns, alehouses, and brothels all day, yet would not go out without prayer in the morning. Oh horrible impiety! this is gross, practical atheism, for

(1.) It is making God the patron of their impiety, as if the holy God approved and encouraged these vices, if they only bribed him with a few formal duties. But what saith God to such profane sinners, that hate instruction, and cast his words behind them, and then allow themselves all licentiousness? "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."* A time is coming when God will vindicate his justice and omniscience against these audacious transgressors, that did misconstrue and abuse his long suffering; as if by his connivance he had justified or allowed their courses.

(2.) This greatly dishonours God, and accustoms men to take his name in vain: as long as you say one thing and do quite contrary, you discredit your profession :† whilst you will be called Jews or Christians, and make your boast of God, if you know his will, practise it; otherwise through breaking the law you dishonour God, "for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."‡ You harden the wicked against God's ways, and make them conclude

* Psal. l. 17—21.

† Dicebantur Christiani ad contumeliam Christi.—*Sal.*

‡ Rom. ii. 17, 24.

that either God is as bad as you, or approves of you, or is ignorant of your conduct, else he would be avenged on you: "he will not hold you guiltless that take his name in vain."*

(3.) How can you expect acceptance when you thus "regard iniquity in your hearts?"† You bring your sacrifice with a wicked heart, therefore it is "abomination to the Lord: when you spread forth your hands," saith God, "I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood."‡ God will disown your persons and performances, and even spread the dung of your solemn feasts upon your faces.‖ Methinks when you read that awful text, Psal. l. 16, your consciences should fly in your faces, as it did in Origen's, "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" O tremble at such a sharp rebuke!

(4.) You tempt your children and servants to abandon religion, while you act so contrary to your prayers and professions: just as scandalous ministers that speak well and live ill; people are ready to say, if this man believed himself what he imposeth upon us, he would act at another rate. Will he direct us this way to heaven, and go quite contrary? surely, he thinks it is but a fancy, else he would embrace it himself. Oh! what have both to answer for? You offend them, hinder them in heaven's way, lead them to hell by your example, and make them manifold more the children of wrath than they were.§ By this means you gratify Satan, he will give you leave to say well, and pray

* Exod. xx. 7.
† Psal. lxvi. 18.
‡ Prov. xxi. 27. See Isa. i. 11—15.
‖ Mal. ii. 3.
§ Matt. xxiii. 15.

well, if only you be still in his fetters by wicked works: this mightily strengthens his interest: yea, by this means you fortify yourselves against convictions, and go hood-winked to hell, for you will not believe but that your state is safe as long as you can pray so well, and are so religious in your families: but, alas! though you bolster up yourselves with an imagination of your interest in Christ, yet abundance of Scriptures tell you, you have nothing to do with him, without holiness of heart and life, "for he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* And be it known to you, that it is not saying a few prayers, according to which you must be judged another day, "but according to what you have done whether it be good or bad.† Nay, these very family prayers, without a principle of grace, and holy life, will aggravate your sin and condemnation: your hypocrisy will sink you deeper in hell, and your long prayers will make you receive greater damnation: for the furnace of hypocrites is seven times hotter than others,‡ and conscience will torment you the more. It is not a sprinkling of a little holy water in your houses that will remove the curse of God, which lies on your families, contracted by your wickedness, covetousness, and unjust gain; for brevity I refer you to Hab. ii. 9—11, Zech. v. 3, Prov. xv. 25—27.

I say not all this to discourage any from family prayer, but to deter from sin, and regulate prayer, and also that specious hypocrites and formalists may be alarmed to commence repentance and reformation.

A word more to such as live in praying families. Young persons, look to your state, it is not living amongst pious people, that will make you pious, nor

* Tit. ii. 14. † 2 Cor. v. 10. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 14. xxiv. 51.

yet complying with praying gestures that will denominate you saints or gospel worshippers; you may do as your superiors would have you for selfish purposes; as young Joash "did right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada;"* but his heart was not right, he proved wicked; so may you, if you be unprincipled, you will either gaze about you, or think of other things, or fall asleep, which is the common practice of young persons, when their parents or masters are at prayer. I shall but introduce an address of that excellent young man Mr. Janeway, to his brother sleeping at family prayer:† O, saith he, what a high contempt is this of the great God! how little sense of your own danger, what dreadful hypocrisy! what a miracle of patience that you were not awakened in hell flames! This reproof softened his brother's heart, and wrought savingly on him, as was hoped, the child being about eleven years of age. Oh! that it might have this effect on many guilty souls.

Alas! sirs, are you not concerned in the prayers of the family? while you sleep, Satan watches and rocks the cradle; and be it known to you, your judgment sleeps not, your damnation slumbereth not;‡ for ought you know you may awake in hell. What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee that thou perish not?||

But besides, there are graceless individuals in praying families. Alas, how many walk unsuitably! they will swear and lie, they are unchaste, lewd and addicted to tippling and intoxication, they commit crimes when they are out of their father's or master's sight, and think, if they can but hide them from the eye of their superiors, all is right. Ah poor deluded mortal, doth

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 2. † Mr. Clarke's last vol. of Lives fol. 66.
‡ 2 Peter ii. 3. || Jonah i. 6.

not God see thee? "Understand, you brutish among the people, ye fools, when will ye be wise? he that planted the ear shall he not hear? he that formed the eye shall he not see?"* Be sure your sin will find you out; and do not others see you? will not they cry shame on you? and reflect upon the families where you were brought up, or have lived? O what a reproach and disparagement do you cast on the instruments of your education? what grief are you to pious people, that shake the head, and cover their faces when they behold you? where is your imitation of religious examples? is this the fruit of their pains, the answer of their prayers? were you thus taught? Woe be to you that must be snatched out of pious families and cast among devils; you had better never have been born, or born among Turks or Pagans; your condemnation will be aggravated; your own consciences will fly in your faces. O how many good instructions have I slighted! you will say, how many convictions have I stifled? what powerful motives have I resisted? what good examples have I disregarded? I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ears to them that instructed me; and now I must mourn without hope, and die without instruction or any to pray for me. †

CHAP. VI.

MOTIVES TO INFLUENCE MASTERS OF FAMILIES TO SET UP ALTARS TO GOD FOR HIS SOLEMN WORSHIP.

And now friends, what remains but a due compliance with this call? O that sacred altars were set up for

* Psal. xciv. 8—11. † Prov. v. 11—14.

God's solemn worship in all families throughout the kingdom! Were God duly worshipped in every house, how happy a nation should we be! we might hope that God would tarry with us, and bless us. If men would pray as Christians, and live as Christians, things would be better with us than they are; let none mistake us, together with the worship of God we must discover the necessity of a saving principle in the heart, and suitable practice in the life; men must first be good, then they will do good; and they must be first united to Christ, or neither will follow; for he saith, "*without me*," χωρὶς ἐμοῦ, being divided from me, "*you can do nothing*"* you can do nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably. O sirs, do not think to put off God with a few duties, or formal performances without sincerity or earnestness. God saith, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice,"† that is, not merely sacrifice, "and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The word mercy, is a synecdoche, comprehending all the duties of the second table under one. By sacrifice is meant also synecdochically, all instituted ordinances and worship, all the affirmative precepts of the second and fourth commandments; but yet prayer to God is of such absolute necessity, and founded in nature, (if it be granted that there is a God) that the heathen could prefer it to sacrifices, saying, offer prayers to the gods not oxen.‡ But though prayer itself be a natural duty, yet the circumstances of time and place may be various as occasion is offered; hence divines say, negative precepts bind always, and with respect to all times;‖ affirmative bind indeed always, but not with respect to

* John xv. 5.

† See this fully explained by Mr. Burroughs, on Hos. vi. 6, page 600—618.

‡ Εὐχὰς τοῖς Θεοῖς, οὐ βόας ἔνε.

‖ Semper et ad semper.

all times;* therefore pray continually; if it be done in season, God looks upon it as always, or continually done; but if another duty of greater importance be to be done at that instant, God dispenseth with the former, and it ceaseth to be a duty then, yet the duty continues, and must not be totally superseded; only God will have sacrifice, but not without the spirit;† for instituted worship, without natural worship, is not to be regarded; "he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth;"‡ nor will God accept those prayers and sacrifices as an atonement for sin, or a dispensation to continue in sin; if you leave out Christ in the former, and make use of Christ in the latter, your prayers are abominable.

Having premised this, I shall subjoin a few motives to persuade you to make a practice of family prayer; besides the reasons to prove it a duty, which I desire you to review:—Answer old testament types—act not against nature itself—accomplish promises and prophecies—imitate good examples—accord with divine providence—distinguish your families from those that are profane—approve yourselves and families to be little churches, as you will give account of the charge committed to your trust—obtain a supply for your family necessities, and a blessing upon yourselves and yours—avoid God's curse and wrath upon your families, and begin in earnest this duty.

And now I beseech you in the bowels of Christ to set up altars, and offer yourselves and families wholly and entirely to the Lord, as a whole burnt-offering for God's sake, who made you for himself, daily preserves you, and can plentifully reward your obedience or punish your disobedience.—I beseech you for Christ's sake who laid down his life for you, "that he might

* Semper non ad semper. † See 10 Instances, ibid. p. 603.
‡ John iv. 24.

purchase you to himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works.*—For the Holy Ghost's sake, who is moving you to duty, suggesting good things to your minds, and will help your infirmities; O do not quench or grieve the Spirit!—For the church's sake, for Zion's sake hold not your peace, but help the travelling church till she be delivered.†—For the nation's sake, which is almost drowned in atheism and sensuality, and daily subject to God's displeasure and fury.—For your poor children and servants' sake, who need your prayers for their conversion, pardon and reconciliation with God; —and for your own souls' sake that are oft under guilt, imperfect in grace, and have much work and burden upon your hands and have a great account to make. Surely if you have any sense upon your hearts of any of these things, you will instantly, constantly and affectionately call upon God in your families. Again, let me urge you from a consideration of the benefits of this practice of family prayer.

1. This devotional altar will be the best ornament to your houses; no pictures, stately rooms or household goods will be such neat and splendid furniture as this worship of God; the finest hangings and most beautiful paintings, are but sordid and disgusting filth to this; it is this that renders a beggar's cottage far more honourable than a prince's palace without it. "Righteousness exalteth a nation and family, but sin is a reproach to any people or person;"‡ this is far before full coffers, magnificent tables, rich feasts and a large train of attendants: for God is there, as the poor hermit-like philospher said, ἐντεὺθὲν ὁι Θεοὶ, here dwell the gods; so the high and lofty One dwells, with the "contrite and humble spirit,"|| in the most homely habitation. What a comely sight it is to behold all the members of

* Tit. ii. 14. † Isa. lxii. 1. ‡ Prov. xiv. 34. || Isa. lvii. 15.

a family prostrate on their knees every morning and evening! to hear melodious praises to God unanimously sung! it is an emblem of heaven. It is recorded of the prince of Anhalt's house, that it was a church, an academy, and court,* where himself was as priest, tutor, judge and sovereign lord. O how happy such a family! I may say of such a master, as the queen of Sheba of Solomon, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee."† This, this only is the glory of a family.

2. This is not only the ornament, but muniment and defence of a family: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty!"‡ Communion with God is usually attended with protection from God; if any be safe it is genuine believers that shall be safe. Lot's family must be delivered from Sodom's flames: "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, as well as upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day," that the enemy shall not find them, "and the shining of a flaming fire by night,"‖ that they may see their way; yea, it shall be "a wall of fire round about them,"§ for upon all the glory shall be a defence: yea, God himself will be the glory in the midst of them; none know the advantages of praying families, but experienced and observant Christians.

3. This is the way and means to bring spiritual and eternal salvation to your houses: surely, that was a great word that our dear Lord spoke to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house!"¶ That little man used much care and made a hard shift to behold Jesus, and met with a blessed, unexpected guest, that brought him the greatest blessing, himself and salva-

* Templum, academia, curia. † 1 Kings x. 8. ‡ Psal. xci. 1.
‖ Isai. iv. 5. § Zech. ii. 5. ¶ Luke xix. 9.

tion with him! Our Lord never comes alone, but brings happiness with him: the conversion of one man as it was a pledge of his adoption, so it made even the whole family an heir of heavenly glory:* for (as Calvin has observed) when God adopts the master of a family, he promiseth to be a God to the whole house, and by right, salvation is extended from the head to the whole body.† So Lydia was baptized and her household, and the jailor; Acts xvi. 15, 33, 34; and oh what joy was produced, when himself and his house believed! yea, Cornelius owning God in family worship, brought to him and his, words, whereby the master and all his house should be saved; not of merit but in a covenant way, and in answer to prayer.‡ O sirs, would you not have your children and servants saved? This is God's appointed way to bring it about; call in divine aid, and grace to do that for yours, which you cannot.

4. Family worship will make up a defect in, or want of public ordinances; Providence may cast your lot in places where the streams of the sanctuary run low or muddy, in this case, house-wells may do you much service; when public persecution breaks up church assemblies, house worship will maintain religion in the world, and that private fire will break out into an open flame: what had become of religion had it not often lodged in private houses? this hath been God's usual reserve to maintain the power of godliness; church history tells us, that the open profession of the gospel hath been at a low ebb, and this hath helped it to a glorious resurrection: ministers were banished, as-

* Domum illam salutis hæredem.

† Nam quia Deus dum patrem familias adoptat, toti etiam ejus domui se in Deum fore promittit, jure salus a capite extenditur ad totum corpus.—*Calv. in loc.*

‡ Acts x. 2, 33, 34.

semblies scattered, churches demolished, and scarce any appearance of public meetings; yet then the fire glowed hot at private hearths, and in God's due time a door was opened for public assemblies: how much are we indebted to God for house altars! and such a day may overtake us again. And suppose you have free liberty of public and powerful ordinances, how can you expect a blessing upon them without seeking God for it in your families? What good will preaching do without your private instructions, admonitions, counsels, and prayers? This will inculcate truths, and may lay a foundation for after-godliness; and as family worship is a most indisputable duty, so least approachable by the enemy, because often indiscernible; however you may most warrantably suffer for it, if that be God's will, as you learn Daniel ventured himself for it to the hungry lions.

My beloved friends, what shall I say? What arguments shall I use to persuade you to this duty of family worship? I doubt your religion is to seek, if you be loth to set up a family altar, which may consecrate all your civil and natural acts and offices; I will but urge you with these few interrogatories.

1. Suppose a grave and pious minister, or Christian friend lodge with you, would you not reach him a bible, and desire him to go to prayer with you, lest he should suspect you to be prayerless at other times? And will not God's authority and presence have the like influence, and awe upon your spirits?

2. Suppose your friends and relations should quite disown, and disclaim you, unless you would pray in your family, would you not make a hard shift to do something that way, rather than be accounted unworthy of human society? And shall that prevail more

than God's disclaiming you, or disowning converse with you?

3. If your landlord should turn you out of your house, or your father should disinherit you, if you set not up this family altar, could you be content to suffer both, rather than do it? And shall a threatening of your Father in heaven, or great landlord, to reject or eject you out of heaven avail nothing?

4. If a law were imposed upon you to pay five shillings every time, that you neglect prayer in your family, would you forfeit that sum as oft as you go prayerless to bed; would you not fear that would beggar you? And shall not greater losses and heavier penalties deter you from this omission?

5. If the king or a nobleman should promise you five pounds every time that you call your family together, read a chapter, sing a psalm, kneel down and pray to God, would you not strain hard to procure that money? And will not a greater profit from Almighty God prevail with you to perform this exercise to obtain a reward?

6. Suppose a brand were set upon your foreheads, like Cain's, or a dreadful trembling should seize upon your bodies for such a neglect, or you should pass under such a stigmatizing character as that in Deut. xxv. 9, 10, "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed:" and if this name be given you, this is a graceless, prayerless man; would not this shame you out of your criminal omission?

7. Suppose the next time you go prayerless to bed, your loveliest child and darling should be snatched away by a sudden stroke of death, as it was in Egypt when the first-born of Pharaoh and others died, and there was a great cry.* Would not this move you

* Exod. xii. 30.

into a better course? Oh, but a greater evil befalls you, your own precious souls are endangered by neglect.

8. Suppose a red cross, with a "Lord have mercy upon us," were set upon your doors, and the pestilence were within your house, seizing on you, one after another, and you had nothing else to do but to get ready to die; would you not spend some time in prayer for yourselves and families? Behold a worse plague is upon you, the plague of sin, and will you not pray?

9. Suppose, upon every omission of family prayer you should lose a limb, or member of your body, first one finger, then a toe should be cut or torn off, till all be gone, and you dismembered; would not this force you to this duty? and yet your precious souls, which are ten thousand times more worth than a limb, yea, than the whole body, are in hazard by wilful neglect.

10. Suppose a gallows were set at your door, and you must be hanged thereupon the next time you go out of your door, when you have not prayed in your family; would you venture to be hanged rather than omit this duty? do you love your lives no better? Oh! but eternal death is far more dreadful, and are eternal torments, that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, nothing to you?* Is the second death easy? And shall not sinners perish for their omission of good, as well as commission of evil? Be it known to you, that if you will not do so, that is, as God commands, behold, "ye have sinned against the Lord,† and be sure your sin will find you out;" it will hunt you as a blood-hound, and haunt you as an evil spirit in conscience here, and in torments hereafter; if God said to Cain for a defect in his sacrifice, "If thou doest not well sin lies at the door,"‡ that is, guilt shall

* Rev. xxi. 8. † Numb. xxxii. 23. ‡ Gen. iv. 7.

be charged upon thee, (and you know how it dogged him, though he failed but in the manner of his sacrifice, not acting faith on Christ for acceptance:) Oh what will become of you that fall short even in the matter also; and do nothing of what God commands you? You even think it a needless ceremony, and mock them that do carefully, constantly, and conscientiously perform this duty; woe unto you if you die in this sin, you are undone for ever.

But one word more, if any offer themselves to be members of particular churches, and to partake of the Lord's supper, I should judge them not fit to be communicants, except they pray in their families; and if any be admitted and perform not their duty, I should think them as worthy of church censures, as those that are idle and omit working in their particular callings, which is enjoined, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 12, 14. What censure this is, less or greater, whether only withdrawing familiar converse with the offender; or upon obstinacy, public excommunication, I leave to the judgment of the learned: but Dr. Lightfoot* tells us out of the Rabbins, that if any one refuse to nourish his children, they must reprove him, make him ashamed, and urge him; if he still refuse, they must publicly proclaim in the synagogue, such a one is cruel and will not nourish his children; he is more cruel than the unclean fowls, for those nourish their young ones; and may we not say the same of such as neglect these needful family exercises for the souls of their dependants?

* Si quis renuit liberos suos alere, reprehendunt eum, pudefaciunt eum, urgent eum: si adhuc renuit, publicé in eum proclamant in synagoga dicentes, hic crudelis est, non vult alere liberos suos: vel ipsis volucribus immundis crudelior, nam illæ pullos suos alunt, &c.—*Dr. Lightfoot in Evang. Matthæi Borœ Hebraicæ, cap.* 18, 17, *p.* 215.

CHAP. VII.

DIRECTIONS FOR SETTING UP AN ALTAR IN FAMILIES, AND FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

I HAVE now done with persuasives to the important exercises of family worship; whether all that I have said will prevail, I know not; but loth I am that all this should be in vain; it is a pity so needful a practice should fall to the ground, and all that I have said should rise up in judgment against you. I again renew my exhortation in the name of the Lord Jesus: You that are young set up your families with religion, whatever you have of the world beside to set up with, this will be your treasure, your palladium, your defence; you cannot miscarry if you begin with God. You that are old, and have been housekeepers long, set up this altar, turn over a new leaf, begin a new life, you are not too old to learn, nor too good to be taught, "better late than never," though you begin at the eleventh hour, you shall not be rejected; death looks you in the face, look up to God and be saved; say not, I will go to hell because I have been long travelling in the road thither; be not ashamed to undo all you have done or misdone, unravel this confused skein; what makes you hesitate? Is not the infinite God worthy of your love, fear, and worship? Are not the souls of your families precious? Is not heaven worth your seeking and having?

Oh! say you, I would gladly set up an altar in my family to the Lord; I would offer him a sacrifice, and worship him, but I know not how to set about it, or manage it in any way so that it may be acceptable

to God, profitable to my family, or comfortable to my own soul, I pray you give me some directions for this purpose. I answer, that I shall very willingly, but first I do solemnly require your promise to set about it in the name and strength of Christ, and do the best you can to do it right. My instructions I shall reduce to two heads: namely, *preparatives to it*, and *management of it.*

For the preparatives to your erection of this family altar, I shall but mention these four:—

1. See that your heads and hearts be well furnished; your heads with sound knowledge, and your hearts with saving grace. Without either of these you will not be fit for this undertaking; without the former you will have no ability, without the latter, you will have no disposition for the practice, but go to it as a bear to the stake.

First, Be sure you get scripture knowledge, a knowledge of God the object of worship, of the mediator by whom only you must have access to the Father, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit that must help your infirmities, a knowledge of yourselves, of divine truths, precepts, and promises; "for that the soul be without knowledge it is not good,"* otherwise you will worship you know not what, or you care not how, or regard not why; you will degenerate into formality and superstition. In the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah the prophet, having in verse 19, told us of an altar, he informs us of a sacrifice, ver. 22, but between those he saith, that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and that the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation. By altar is meant gospel worship; by a pillar at the border of it, is meant, a monument of the true religion, exhibiting evidence of

* Prov. xix. 2.

their piety in all places. But without the true knowledge of God in Christ, they would set up the Athenian altar, "To the unknown God;"* and therefore it is said, that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, in gospel times, and not only so, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord, savingly, sincerely, sensibly, and experimentally for the words denote affection and practice, then and never till then will they be fit to offer an oblation; for if men offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if the offerer be blind and ignorant, is not he evil?† will God accept such a person? what cares he for men's ignorant devotions? if there be no knowledge of God in the land, there is no mercy nor truth;‡ for saving knowledge is the door and window to let in saving grace.

Secondly, You must all have a saving principle of grace in your hearts, a submissive will, a renewed conscience, sanctified affections, a soul set with a bias heaven-wards, that you "may delight in the law of God, after the inward man," and "may worship God in spirit and in truth,"‖ else your praying will be but cant, your labour will be but lip-labour, and so lost labour; all your piety will be but hypocrisy, and your hearts will not be engaged in it, then you will be heartless in setting about it, and soon weary of it; without union to Christ, you can do nothing, see then that Christ dwell in your hearts by faith—that is the mystical bond; to be united to him by love—that is the moral bond.§ From this spring flow holy desires, delight in God, fear of God, repentance, humility, self-denial, zeal, and all other graces, without which you will be but cold worshippers of God; set up with some thing within, or you are formalists at best. But you will

* Acts xvii. 23. † Mal. i. 8. ‡ Hos. iv. 1.
‖ Rom. vii. 22. John iv. 24. § Eph. iii. 17. 1 John iv. 16.

say, how shall we get this principle of grace? I answer, you must be convinced, that you have it not by nature, that you cannot work it in your own hearts, for "faith is the gift of God," you must examine yourselves whether faith be in you, you must study and plead the covenant of grace, wherein God promiseth to "put his law in your inward parts, to teach you to know him, to circumcise your hearts to love him, to put his fear in your hearts, and to put his Spirit in you, and a new spirit within you;"* and by studying and pleading these precious promises you may be partakers of a divine nature, that you may serve the Lord in a different and proper manner.†

2. Another preparative for the erection of a family altar, is the due and regular constitution of families; which consists in a solemn choice of family relations. Masters of families must be very cautious herein; it is true, children are necessary parts thereof and persons must take these as God sends them, they are not elective, or of our choice, but there are ways appointed by God to train them to what is good, but that I meddle not with at present; it is to such things as are arbitrary or within our power to choose, that I refer, as wives and servants, or assistants in families, these may be a great furtherance or hinderance to a householder in the exercises of religion.

(1.) When you are to choose a wife, be very careful. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"‡ lest it come to pass, that when you draw one way your partner draw another; and when you would pray in your family, she be busy about the world, and will not join with you, but act the part of scoffing Michal, who

* Eph. ii. 8. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Jer. xxxi. 33. 34. Deut. xxx. 6. Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

† 2. Peter i. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

pointed her sarcasm at her holy husband David, for his fervent zeal in God's worship when dancing before the ark.* O what grief of heart will this be to you, who must be forced to turn your sweet communion, into a severe admonition of your own wife! and the nearer the relation the heavier the affliction; when your wife proves a tempting Eve, or as Solomon's wives, "who turned away his heart from God;"† oh! the danger of seduction; but if not so, yet a bad wife will be a continual vexation, like a constant dropping in a very rainy day; you little know the inconveniences attending such a relation; you will say, how can we help it? I answer, prudence, prayer, and due consideration beforehand may ordinarily prevent such a bad choice, if you make it your business to marry in the Lord,‡ and yoke only with such a one as bears Christ's yoke, consulting christian friends, and regarding beauty, portion, and parentage as subordinate; be sure that there be well-grounded hopes of saving grace in the first place; let religion and reason, not passion or fancy make your choice, lest you smart for your folly. O what a help may a prudent, gracious wife be in assisting you in setting up this family altar; "a wise woman buildeth her house;" Manoah's wife encouraged her husband,‖ and Rachel and Leah builded the house of Jacob or Israel; Hannah prayed while her husband Elkanah sacrificed, and no doubt joined with him devoutly at home.§ O what a blessed harmony to see husband and wife "heirs together of the grace of life,"¶ that their prayers may not be hindered, but mutually furthered! this plainly intimates that unsuitableness of spirit, or untowardness in either, hinders prayers, that

* 2 Sam. vi. 20. † 1 Kings xi. 2—4. ‡ 1 Cor. vii. 39.
‖ Prov. xiv. 1. Judg. xiii. 23.
§ Ruth iv. 11. 1 Sam. i. 3, 10, 13. ¶ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

is, either diverts them from praying, or mars the efficacy of prayer; therefore let young men be wise in this main concern of choosing a wife, for who would fetch water to kindle fire, as one saith, or select a bed of snow to keep one warm? you have quench-coal enough now within, espouse not more, rather get bellows to kindle your spark.

(2.) As for servants, be serious and particular in choosing pious ones; if it be possible choose religious servants: trust not to your care and pains to make them so; if Onesimus be begotten in bonds, he will be profitable to his pious master Philemon;* there is no trusting irreligious servants, they will but comply out of awe, and may degenerate into atheism. If thy servant be upright, he will not only pray when thou prayest, which will make a blessed harmony, but will pray alone for thee, as faithful Eliezer did in his master's business,† and then things will succeed well; for (as one saith) a praying servant will not only work, but set God to work. O happy family, where servants echo to their master's sighs! These will unanimously besiege heaven with importunate supplications: yea, let carnal Laban and Potiphar speak as they find, and they will affirm that God hath blessed them for Jacob and Joseph's sakes.‡ But you little know the hurt you may have, and your children also by graceless servants. This was David's purpose and endeavour to have men faithful to God, to be house inmates with him, and to banish from him froward or proud persons, slanderers, apostates, deceitful liars, and wicked doers;‖ and if you will serve God comfortably in your families, you must imitate his pious example.

3. Dedicate your houses to the Lord. So did God's

* Philem. 10, 11.
† Gen. xxiv. 12.
‡ Gen. xxx. 27. xxxix. 5.
‖ Psal. ci. 3—8.

servants of old, when they had built a new house they dedicated it, Deut. xx. 5; when they had been banished from it, and were restored, they again dedicated it as David did, when Absalom had polluted it.* We read also of a man "sanctifying his house to be holy unto the Lord," Lev. xxvii. 14; this must be done by praising God for houses to dwell in, all have not this mercy; some choice saints had no certain dwelling place:† others have wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth, of whom the world was not worthy, yea, our dear Lord himself had not where to lay his head!‡ And who are we that God should honour us with convenient habitations? It becomes us to own him as our chief landlord, resolving by God's assistance to pay our chief rent to him, and "honour the Lord with our substance and all that we have:"‖ we must thank God that we have any thing to give back again to him; for "all things come of him, and of his own we give him." We must first give ourselves to the Lord, as devoted to his fear, service, and worship:§ as we must not be content with what God gives us, except he give us himself, no more will God be content with what we give him, without giving ourselves to him: then let us give him our children and servants, so far as we are able, and be earnest with him in prayer for a blessing on all we are or have; let us plead the covenant of grace and its promises for ourselves and ours, as holy Jacob did:¶ observe the word of precept, for our warrant to dwell in our houses, with the promises for our encouragement, and act according to rule and the best patterns, engaging that we will walk within our house with a perfect heart;**

* Psal. xxx. † 1 Cor. iv. 11. ‡ Heb. xi. 38. Matt. viii. 20.
‖ Prov. iii. 9. § 1 Chron. xxix. 10—14. Psal. cxix. 38, 94, 106.
¶ Gen. xxxii. 9, 10. ** Psal. ci. 2.

that we will use all we have to God's glory and the good of his church; that we will entertain Christ's ambassadors in our houses, as Lydia and the jailor did;* that we will read scriptures, instruct our families, sing psalms, continue instant in family and closet prayer, that all the rooms of our house may be seasoned: if you thus begin well, you lay a good foundation, and may groundedly hope that the presence of God will be with you, and with your families.

4. Order your families aright: as there must be discipline in the church which is a fence to doctrine and worship, "beholding," saith the apostle, "your order and the stedfastness of your faith;"† so it is in families, if the master have by gross sin, passion, pride, too much lenity, or imprudent behaviour, forfeited his authority, or by tyranny have abused it, that he become contemptible, he will hardly keep up family worship; children or servants will be ready to laugh him to scorn, as not able to rule himself, therefore little fit to rule others, and think they have good reason to ramble abroad; they will be under no government, and will come none to prayers; this is their sin, but there hath been too much occasion given by their weak or wilful masters; therefore I advise that you maintain your authority, and use it for God. Lose not the reins of government, yet sweeten it with love: when love oils the wheels, and lines the yoke, government becomes amiable and attractive to duty; when David said, hear, my brethren, it chained his subjects to him, but when Rehoboam answered roughly, it drove them from him. Rule your dependants in love, and they will obey in love: if you shew good-will to their souls, with good-will they will do you service, as to the Lord;‡ holiness creates reverence; tender-

* Acts xvi. 15, 34. † Col. ii. 5. ‡ Eph. vi. 7, 9.

ness produceth ingenuous subjection; affection maintains authority more than domineering rigour; let it appear that you rule your families under God, and for God. I confess this theme is more proper to the next subject of the regal or magisterial power of householders, whither I remit it; yet a word or two may be allowed, as due order and government do promote God's worship; be sure that every member in your family know and keep in their posts and places, that there be no interfering or envy: and see that all order their business both within doors and without, so as to attend family prayer; and see that you do not overcharge them with so much business as to render them incapable, either by unseasonable attendance on their secular concerns forcing them to be absent, or by overtiring them, that they are fitter to lie down in their beds, than to fall down on their knees and lift up their hearts to God in prayer; learn to order your affairs with discretion.* Let every work know its time, and every one know his work, that confusion may not shut out religion: order facilitates any business, prevents impediments, and produceth good success; I know that some families cannot ordinarily be reduced to such a good order as some others; but if masters were prudent to contract their worldly business into a less compass, or wisely to make arrangements, though their families be numerous, and business urgent, they might do much this way. Oh be not greedy of gain to trouble your own house: cumber not yourselves or yours with many things, but mind the "one thing needful."† Be sure you maintain religion whatever you do; "Give unto God the things that are God's." Learn to divide the hoof aright, that the world encroach not upon God's due, or rob him of his right: if you separate religion from your calling, it is

* Psal. cxii. 5. † Luke x. 42.

mere heathenism; if you separate your particular callings from your religion, it becomes enthusiasm. Unite them together, and they will be mutually helpful to each other, and to you in a due pursuit of both: change of employments will make both a pleasing recreation; observe the apostle's rule: "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God;" 1 Cor. vii. 24. Let your condition, station, relation be what it will, engage God to be with you, bespeak his presence by prayer, and sanctify all your civil actions with religious exercises.

CHAP. VIII.

DIRECTIONS FOR CARRYING ON THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN FAMILIES, AS TO THE MATTER OF PRAYER.

I HAVE briefly despatched the preparatives for erecting and managing family worship, in a due order. I now proceed more directly to the carrying on of this worship solemnly, that you may please, glorify, and enjoy God, while you profit and edify yourselves and others in this exercise; in which I propose two classes of instructions, which concern the matter and manner of family worship.

1. As to the matter, or words in family prayer, the Holy Ghost saith, "Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously—"* by words, he means not only phrases, or literal expressions, for therein hypocrites may abound, but,

(1.) The subject matter, to be treated on, as Joab

* Hosea xiv. 2.

put words into the woman's mouth;* that is, the main purport, design, or manner of her similitude, not every syllable she spoke.

(2.) Practise accordingly, keep the law; act as real saints, for the ten commandments are called [דברים] words, and our compliance therewith must answer our professions and prayers, else we do nothing; we must live up to our prayers.†

(3.) The word also signifies an ordering, regulating, and marshalling of things, and indeed we cannot order our words before him, by reason of darkness, therefore must we be very cautious and exact, as the wise man admonisheth, Eccl. v. 2, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few," that is, well weighed in prayer or vows, God is of infinite majesty not to be despised, of transcendant holiness not to be offended, and of unsearchable knowledge not to be deceived, nor to be flattered with vain repetitions; study not to speak fine but fit words, not many but weighty, proceeding from thy heart, directed unto God, and pertinent to the matter in hand.

(4.) Words may signify arguments in prayer, so Job vi. 25, "How forcible are right words," that is, proper arguments, as appears from the latter clause; "but what doth your arguing reprove?" accordingly holy Job wisheth, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come near to his seat; I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments;"‡ not to out-argue God, or to prove him

* 2 Sam. xiv. 3.

† Hebræi eâdem voce exprimunt verba et res, quia verba debent esse realia, et homine digna præsertim apud Deum.—*Vid. Pol. Crit. in loc.* Exod. xx. 1.

‡ Job xxiii. 3, 4.

unjust, no, nor to move God to that which is not his will, for "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?"* No, he is righteous and unchangeable, I dare not deal with God, or challenge him to deal with me upon terms of strict justice, but upon terms of new covenant grace, pleading his promises made to sinners in Christ, and soliciting for the performance of them.

And now I proceed to assist householders in the matter of their family worship, particularly in prayer. I shall produce some stones out of the word of God for rearing this family altar, and the rather because it has been a general complaint of many, and a principal objection with them, that they knew not what to say if they should kneel down in their houses with their families. But to such as are willing though feeble in their addresses to the throne of grace, I shall subjoin these two instructions for their assistance:

1. Attend upon a powerful ministry. There you will hear directions, motives, precepts, promises, scripture arguments to quicken and direct you in this practice; there you may gain knowledge of God the object of worship, of Christ the mediator and advocate, of the Holy Ghost that must assist you; there you will get a good understanding of God's mind and will, which will furnish you with ability, and further your acquaintance with God; "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding;"† that man is prepared to every good work. But how shall a person obtain this sacred understanding? I answer, one way is by the ear, as man lost true wisdom by abusing that sense, and hearkening to the Syren song of the subtile serpent; so the scriptures frequently call you to hearken to the voice of God in the ministry of the word; light, and life, and love may

* Job xxiii. 13. † Prov. iii. 13.

come in at that door, "Hear and your souls shall live; faith comes by hearing;" men may receive the Spirit, by the hearing of faith.* But how shall men breathe without spiritual life? and how can men pray without the assistance of the Spirit? "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?"† nor is it any kind of preacher that you must hear, but you must take heed whom you hear, that they be sent, that is, duly qualified and regularly commissioned; you must take heed what you hear, that it be not men's fancies, but the approved word of the living God; you must also take heed how you hear; alas! any kind of hearing will not do; you must pray and prepare before you hear it, set yourselves in God's presence, cast out sin, apply the word to yourselves, mix it with love, own God's authority in it, hide it in your hearts, meditate on it, and resolve upon the practice of it; and who can tell what blessed fruits it may produce in your hearts and lives? Pray "that the word may have free course, and be glorified;"‡ and if it be so in you, the fruit of preaching will appear in your prayers as well as practice. A heart opened to the word, will "open the mouth wide in prayer;"‖ but if you will not hearken to God's voice, you will have no voice to God, nor will God regard what you say; for "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."§

2. "Search the scriptures;"¶ these contain both the rule and matter of prayer; if you be mighty in the scriptures, you will be mighty in prayer. God loves

* Isa. lv. 3. Rom. x. 17, Gal. iii. 2.
† Rom. x. 14. ‡ 2 Thess. iii. 1. ‖ Psal. lxxxi. 10, 11.
§ Prov. xxviii. 9. ¶ John v. 39.

to be spoken to in his own language; study scripture precepts, and turn them into prayer, study scripture promises, and turn them into pleas, study scripture threatenings, and turn them into deprecations, and study scripture patterns for imitation; you may find several excellent prayers in the bible, as that of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 23—32. Jacob prays, Gen. xxxii. 9, 12. Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11—13. Joshua, vii. 6—9. Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 11. Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 6—9. viii. 22—53. David, 1 Chron. xvii. 16—27. Nehemiah, i. 4—11. Ezra, ix. Daniel, ix. And we have many devout prayers put up and recorded by the apostle Paul, and others, too many to be mentioned, which in reading the holy scriptures you may meet with. Say not then, you have nothing to say before the Lord; it is your ignorance or negligence, if you be barren in your addresses to the throne of grace; some good divines have proposed a method and words in scripture phraseology, which I will not now trouble you with; but if you make it a daily custom to read the bible, you will find appropriate expressions flowing into your mind in prayer, which will prove pertinent matter upon all occasions; when you read scripture, think, now God is speaking to me, and thereby furnishing me with matter to speak to him in prayer; this passage suits my case, I will improve it in confession, petition, deprecation or thanksgiving, in my addresses to God, and thus you will arrive at a habit of free converse with God; and it becomes masters of families to be more employed in reading scriptures than others, God orders kings, captains, and ministers, to be daily exercised in this duty,* because they were to be helpful to others; so must you: if you consult God's word, you "go in unto God," so some observe from comparing, Psal. lxxiii.

* Deut. xvii. 19. Josh. i. 8. 1 Tim. iv. 13.

17, "going into the sanctuary of God," with 2 Sam. vii. 18, "then went king David in, and sat before the Lord," that is, he went in to God; to intimate that reading and praying are nearly related; the one is a help to the other; if you read much, it will help you to pray much, it will help you to read and understand. Be much employed in both.

3. Learn to understand and improve the Lord's prayer, Matt. vi. 9—13. Consider the prologue, parts, and conclusion of it: get some succinct and plain exposition of it, do not cantingly, formally, and superstitiously repeat it, as a charm, but use it as a comprehensive platform of praying: I am not altogether against the use of the words in the Lord's prayer, nay, I would rather you would kneel down with your family, and say nothing but the Lord's prayer, than that you should use no prayer at all: only see you understand the meaning of it, and do not rattle it over as a parrot, but use it seriously, and beware of mocking God; hypocrisy is a sin as well as atheism: to pray otherwise than Christ has taught, is not only ignorance, but a grievous sin, saith an ancient writer;* this refers both to the matter and manner of praying, for, saith he, "The Father will acknowledge the words of his Son, when we pray to him, in his name. Let him be in our voice that dwells in our hearts. God is not the hearer of the voice but of the heart."† But we are now speaking of family prayer, wherein God requires both voice and heart, and are intending to assist with respect to the matter of prayer. It is a certain truth,

* Aliter orare quam docuit non ignorantia sola est, sed et culpa. *Cyprian. Serm.* 6. de Orat. Dominicâ et cum ipsum habeamus apud Patrem advocatum pro peccatis nostris, advocati nostri verba promamus, *id. ib.*

† Qui habitat intus in pectore, ipse sit et in voce: quia Deus non vocis, sed cordis auditor est.

that all and only the things that are to be asked of God are comprehended in the Lord's prayer; that is to say, the sum and substance of the things to be asked: if you do not always utter the words, you must express the sense; therefore it is fit you should understand them, for every word hath its weight: *Our Father who art in heaven:* thou art the common Father of all mankind, and our Father in Christ, we humbly and reverently prostrate ourselves at thy footstool, in confidence of being received through thy well-beloved Son and our advocate: give us child-like affection for thee, with endeared love to all thine, and tender compassion for all others! *Hallowed be thy name:* let thy glorious titles, attributes, word and ordinances be manifested through the world, dispose all things to the glory of thy name, assist us in our confessing and forsaking our sins, adoring thine infinite perfections, believing in thee, subjecting ourselves to thee, attending on thee, and aiming at thy glory in all we are, or do, or suffer. *Thy kingdom come:* destroy, O Lord, the devil's kingdom of ignorance and wickedness, advance thy kingdom in converting sinners, building up thy church, maintaining the power of godliness, and hastening the kingdom of glory, confirming and preparing our souls for our Lord's second coming. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:* let thy preceptive will be our rule, enable us to comply with it, give us knowledge of it, conquer the enmity of our stubborn wills, enable us to do thy will singly, sincerely, universally, and constantly, as angels and glorified saints; help us quietly to acquiesce in thy providential will, be it apparently for us or against us. *Give us this day our daily bread:* vouchsafe to us a competent portion of outward comforts, for our daily supply, and thy blessing therewith, which is the staff of our bread, for we

depend on thee for all. *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors:* for Christ's sake and satisfaction, pardon all our sins; whereby we are indebted to divine justice, which we can never satisfy, but we lay hold by faith on the Lord our righteousness, and freely forgive all men their offences against us, and pray God to forgive them. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:* Lord, we have depraved hearts, prevent occasions of sin, restrain the tempter, keep us out of harm's way, or make us conquerors of the world, the flesh, and the devil; let not sin have dominion over us. *For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen:* we take not our encouragement in our prayers from any thing in ourselves, but from thee who art the only sovereign, all-sufficient God, able and willing to help thy poor creatures; to thee only be ascribed all dominion, blessing, honour, glory, and power, for evermore, amen, so be it.

Thus I have given you a short exposition of this excellent prayer, that you may be left without excuse for your wilful neglect.

4. Frequent Christian society; converse with pious, praying persons, this will help you in family exercises and worship, not only as it is a good example, but as it assimilates you to them, and also as it provokes to a holy emulation, it will make you shame with yourselves, that such as had no better assistance or higher education than you, have yet attained to such knowledge, gifts, and elocution; this will make you admire the grace of God in them, and think it not impossible, but that the same grace may do as much in you. Paul sought by the piety of the Gentiles, to provoke the Jews to emulation, and tells us that the zeal of the Corinthians,* in charitable contribution, had provoked

* Rom. xi. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 2.

very many: it is not to tell what light, and life, and love may be conveyed from one Christian to another. If two lie together they have heat; iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend:* they say boars whet their tusks one against another; and the younger ox learns of the elder to plough:† wicked men exasperate one another. So must, so will God's children consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works:‡ εἰς παροξυσμὸν, this word is borrowed from physicians, who describe a violent fever by it, which imports that at some times the fit is so strong, as to make the body to tremble, and the bed to shake under the patient. The same word is used to express the contention, or paroxysm betwixt Paul and Barnabas:‖ only that was of anger, this is of love; striving which should exceed in zeal for God, from the sense of Christ's love to them; outstripping one another in heavenly movements. However, if you frequently converse in the society of praying Christians, you will be acquainted with their expressions, which you may make use of, if only you have experience thereof, and your hearts be engaged; thus their phrases becoming yours, you will be more prepared for family duty.

5. Converse with God alone: first pray in your closets, and then you will be better able to pray in your families, both as to matter and manner: a frequent exercise of closet prayer will move you to converse with God: there you will find that God will suggest words to your minds, which you may employ in your families in prayer, and this course will embolden you before others: and possibly this is one part of God's reward of closet prayer bestowed openly, which our Lord

* Eccl. iv. 9—12. Prov. xxvii. 17.

† A bove majori discit arare minor. ‡ Heb. x. 24. ‖ Acts xv. 39.

promiseth. Thus saith Eliphas to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with him," (that is, with God,) and as one of the blessed fruits of familiarity, "thou shalt lift up thy face unto God," that is, thou shalt openly own him before others without sinful modesty or timidness, as a man dares boldly approach his intimate friend, whoever be present; he adds also, "thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee."*—O the blessed fruits of a soul's acquaintance with God in private! such will not be ashamed of him before others, such will resemble God;† this intimacy transforms men into his likeness, as long intimate acquaintance hath altered the habit of some men's bodies and dispositions of their minds into that of their friends; on Moses conversing with God in the mount his face shone, so that some rays of divine glory appeared to Aaron and the Israelites;‡ the more you are with God, the more you have of God, and this of praying with boldness, confidence, and assurance is both a duty and privilege, obtained by frequent conversing with God as our friend: but the manner of the expression is worth notice, "thou shalt make thy prayer to him:"‖ the words are emphatical, and signify a pouring out of prayer, with a multitude of words in prayer, strong words, clothed with power: you will never want matter, or words, or enlargedness, if you be thus acquainted with God: your family will soon perceive that you have been with Jesus in secret, when they discern such freedom of speech and spirit; now, nobody can hinder you from praying with your family, one act of religion draws on another, private duties prepare for more public; and it is true, what Dr. Preston observes, that

* Matt. vi. 6. Job xxii. 21, 26, 27. † 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ Exod. xxxiv. 30.

‖ עתר Multiplicavit, proprie verba fortia fudit in oratione.

helps to religion are within the compass of religion itself, multiplied acts strengthen habits, by running men learn to run, by writing they learn to write: so by praying you will best learn to pray.

6. Study the nature of sin; see what a scriptural discovery you can make of the sin of nature and the nature of sin, the kinds, degrees, circumstances, and aggravations of sin, together with the doleful effects and consequences of it, in this and another world: this will help you in confession, self-accusation, and deep humiliation, which is a considerable part of prayer. This self-knowledge helps both in the matter and manner of praying. 2 Chron. vi. 29, "What prayer, or what supplication shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief." Sorrow makes eloquent, you need not prompt a necessitous beggar; he hath words at will, and shews his sores, which is powerful oratory. If sin were your burden, it would squeeze out sighs and groans, and a groan is a good prayer; "Lord, my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee:" * and if there be inward sighs, there will be outward speeches; if you be full of griefs, you will be full of complaints; if you be full of matter, you will speak that you may be refreshed. † Consult the book of conscience, and you will find it easy to draw up a large bill of indictment against your own souls.

7. Study your wants, need makes beggars, and adds earnestness to prayers: learn of poor beggars at the door, malefactors at the bar: consider your own indigency, the case of your families, congregations, and the nation. Is there no unconverted sinner in your family? is there no sin breaking out amongst you? is there no

* Psalm xxxviii. 9. † Job xxxii. 18—20.

grace weak or wanting in yourself or yours? Is there no temptation assaulting any of you? or no affliction, or judgment passing on you, or impending over you? Look and look again, as you use to make an inspection into your stock, when you go to the market to make provision. Follow the Lord importunately for a crumb of mercy, as the poor woman in the gospel, or as the importunate widow, or if you can say no more, say as the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner,"* the Lord be merciful to my poor sinning family: who knows what prevalency may be in such a word, uttered from an humble sense of soul-wants? you know that man went to his house justified rather than the vaunting, vain-glorious Pharisee.

8. Make a catalogue of your mercies; recollect the kindness of God, personal and domestic, both in temporal and spiritual things. It is true, they are so many that they cannot be declared in order, "they are more than can be numbered;"† but let that not discourage you in your attempt, (any more than reckoning up your sins, which are also innumerable,‡) but do what you can in both, if you cannot do what you would or ought, the more you endeavour the more will be suggested to your memory, and thus the more will be the matter of praise and thankfulness for renewed mercy every day, and when you experience any signal mercies, set up an Ebenezer, and say, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us,"‖ you will find multiplied occasions of such memorials, speak good of God in conference, and call in help of others, "to magnify the Lord with you,"§ and perhaps the members of your family will bring every one a stone to raise the pile of praise to a

* Matt. xv. 27. Luke xviii. 3, 13 † Psal. xl. 5.
‡ Psal. xl. 12. ‖ 1 Sam. vii. 12. § Psal. xxxiv. 3.

greater elevation, yea, and bring their coal to warm your hearts together, and kindle a greater flame of heavenly devotion; try this course, and you will see the blessed issue.

9. Consider what dangers daily threaten you, and see if that will not afford you matter of prayer; possibly some of your callings expose you to greater hazards than ordinary, some ride much abroad early and late to markets, and are subject to falls; some work under ground and may be crushed to death, others go to sea, and witness the wonders of the Lord in the deep, and it hath been said, "he that knows not how pray, let him go to sea."* There is no calling but it hath its snares and difficulties, to which it exposes persons; and wisdom is profitable to direct; foreseen dangers hurt least; for as persons are forewarned, it affords matter of deprecation. But there are thousands of accidents which the most sagacious eye cannot foresee, which you see others fall into and fall by, one falls into a pit and perisheth, with respect to another his horse falls, and he breaks an arm, or leg, or his neck, some are assaulted by robbers and slain, others are burnt by sudden fires in their houses; your own observation may afford you many sad instances, and what befalls others may befall you, and may not these afford you matter of prayer for their prevention, or your preparation for them, put yourselves into God's hands every morning and evening, for you are never safe but under his tuition, the omniscient, omnipotent God only can guard you and your family. "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps;"† other means are ineffectual without him.

* Qui nescit orare, discat navigare.

† Psal. cxxi. 4. cxxvii. 1, 2.

10. Beg God's Holy Spirit. It is a spirit of grace and supplication,* go to God in the name of Christ, and if you can say nothing else, yet tell him you cannot pray, but withal say, "Lord, I hear others can pray, why not I?" No matter how dull the scholar is, so I have thee for my master, I hear others of humble gifts naturally, who are yet instructed spiritually, and have arrived at great proficiency in managing family worship, and may not I be endowed with the same spirit, first of sanctification, and then of supplication? come, Lord, and teach me to pray as John taught his disciples, or rather as Jesus teacheth his members, thou sayest, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"† I know this is a hard text, but it must not be understood, as if God would give his sanctifying Spirit on a carnal man's prayer, by virtue of a promise, but either common gifts of the Spirit to such, or spiritual influences to those who ask with sincerity and earnestness, or further degrees of the Spirit to his own children, and so I think it is to be taken as the pledge and earnest of the Holy Spirit to believers, as Calvin takes it; as being one of the good things of the kingdom of heaven, which pious souls most importunately ask and beg; and you see here a free and faithful promise of Christ, that his and our Father will bestow his Holy Spirit on us, and the blessed apostle tells us the advantage of the Holy Spirit for our assistance in prayer; Rom. viii. 26, "Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought," &c. All acknowledge that the Spirit must help our infirmities in the manner of right praying, exciting graces

* Zech. xii. 10. † Luke xi. 1, 13.

and holy affections, and centring our thoughts on God.* But the great question is whether the Holy Ghost dictates to God's children matter or expressions in prayer. I think the text is clear that it doth; for the text saith not "that we know not *how* to pray, but *what* we should pray for as we ought;" hence a schoolman saith, "it is most difficult to know what is to be desired;"† a pious man knows that his chief end is God's glory, and the enjoyment of him, but unless the Spirit teach him he will miss it in the means, and as our Saviour saith, "ask he knows not what,"‡ as we have some instances in scripture,‖ and much sad experience in ourselves, and though the Lord's prayer be a rule in general, yet we may be at a loss in particulars except the Spirit bring things into our thoughts, and often suggest scripture expressions to our memories, in earnest and appropriate pleading with the Lord; the Spirit enlightens us in our ignorance, assists us in our weakness, resolves us in our doubting, comforts us in our sadness, quickens us when lifeless, composeth us in our distractions; O therefore engage this blessed advocate within, who will plead for us in our hearts, as Christ makes intercession at God's right hand, and then you pray acceptably. God hears no language but that of his Spirit; and God's Spirit makes intercession by helping his people to intercede; he prays, by helping us to pray, not as Arians imagine, supposing that the Holy Ghost is below the Son, as supplicating the Son, or that the Son is less than the Father, as supplicating the

* Jubemur quidem pulsare, sed nemo sponte præmeditari vel unam syllabam poterit, nisi arcano Spiritus sui instinctu nos Deus pulset adeoque sibi corda nostra aperiat.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Difficillimum est scire quid sit desiderandum.

‡ Matt. xx. 22.

‖ Luke ix. 54, 55. Job vi. 8, 9. Jonah iv. 3.

Father, which is a gross mistake;* for Christ intercedes for us, by the virtue of his merit with the Father, and the Holy Ghost by helping us to cry, Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 6. Let none imagine that this is an enthusiastic fancy, or a miraculous gift, (as Chrysostom thought,) no, nor a melancholy dream; they that have any solid experience in the things of God, know that the assistance of the Spirit in prayer is the greatest reality in the world; nor was it a temporary gift, but a permanent grace abiding with the church for ever, enabling even private Christians to pray in the Spirit;† yet differently, as God sees good, sometimes more enlarging their hearts, and at other times withdrawing his influences; and it becomes us to esteem highly his assistance, and pray earnestly for it.

CHAP. IX.

THE MANNER OF PERFORMING FAMILY WORSHIP CONSIDERED.

THUS at last I have despatched the instructions which concern the matter of family prayer, to aid such as are sensible of their own insufficiency; and having been longer than I intended, I must contract the rest.

As to the due manner of performing such solemn family exercises, so much is written by others concerning the necessary essentials of all prayer, that it is needless here to add any thing. With respect to the

* Spiritus interpellat faciendo nos interpellare, orat faciendo nos orare, clamat faciendo nos clamare.—*Vide sis Pareum, in loc.*

† John xiv. 16. Eph. vi. 18. Jude, 20.

essence of all prayer, public, family, secret prayer, you must be sure it be from the heart, you must pray with the spirit, and understanding also;* your family devotion must not be a mere customary formality, like the Papists' tongue threshing, as Luther calls their canting. You must engage your hearts to the exercise, and then draw nigh to God; you must also ask what is according to his will, ground your prayers upon a promise, as David did;† and God requires you also to prepare your heart, and then to stretch out your hands to him in prayer; wash before you worship; for if you regard iniquity God will not hear your prayer; you must stir up yourselves to take hold of God;‡ come in sincerity, with all humility and with importunity. You must propose right ends in your prayers, not for self-credit to be seen of men, as the Pharisees, nor for worldly profit to please a friend, but for God's glory and enjoying communion with him. But above all, see that you employ Christ as your advocate, in all your addresses to God, without whom your best sacrifices are rejected. I must not however insist on these things, but lay down some general directions how to prepare this family altar, and the sacrifice thereon.

1. Set your souls in God's presence:‖ remember who it is you have to deal with; not with men like yourselves, but with the infinite, eternal, incomprehensible majesty of the great God, a heart-searching, all-seeing, and holy God, "that is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; whose throne is in heaven, who loveth righteousness; but a hypocrite cannot come before him;§ endeavour to affect your hearts with an awe of his divine majesty: consider his

* 1 Cor. xiv. 15. † Jer. xxx. 21. 2 Sam. vii. 27.
‡ 1 John v. 14, 15. Job xi. 13. Psal. xxvi. 6. lxvi. 18. Isa. lxiv. 7.
‖ Psal. xvi. 8. § Hab. i. 13. Psal. xi. 4, 7. Job xiii. 16.

infinite perfections, and the great distance between the glorious God and poor worms, yea, between the holy God and your degenerate souls; remember God is a "consuming fire,"* and you are as dried stubble, therefore serve him with reverence and godly fear; give him the glory due unto his name,† internally and externally, in your conceptions of him, affection for him, and prostration before him; he is to be had in reverence of all that are round about him;‡ it is more to appear before God than the holiest men, or greatest princes on earth, regard not auditors or those that unite in worship, so much as the object of worship; say as Abraham the friend of God, "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."‖ O that my soul were weighted with the glorious majesty of God!

2. Call in divine assistance; the first thing you do, stand up, and implore God's blessing upon you in the present undertaking (except you find it convenient to begin with a psalm to call the family together,) and desire the Lord to unite your hearts unto him,§ and prevent distractions, and Satan's temptations, and vain, worldly cogitations in that duty, and lift up your souls to himself, with such an ejaculation as this, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens; look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven and bless thy servants!"¶ We are taking thy blessed book into our hands, "Lord, open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law, let it be a light to our feet, and a lanthorn to our paths: let it be as our necessary food, yea, sweeter than honey or honeycomb;"** more profitable than thousands of gold

* Heb. xii. 28, 29. † Psal. xxix. 2. ‡ Psal. lxxxix. 7.
‖ Gen. xviii. 27. § Psal. lxxxvi. 11. ¶ Lam. iii. 41. Deut. xxvi. 15.
** Psal. cxix. 18. Job xxiii. 12. Psal. xix. 10.

and silver; help us to understand, apply, and practise what we read: "let our prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice: let thine ears be now attentive, and thine eyes open, to hear the prayer of thy servants; to us belongeth shame and confusion of face; but to the Lord our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses."* Thou hast proclaimed thy name, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, &c.† To this name of the Lord do we flee, pleading for mercy, only for the sake of Christ; "look upon the face of thine anointed."‡

3. Immediately commence this practice of erecting an altar to the Lord: embrace the first conviction; the evening of that day when you have heard the duty pressed on you, set about it; plead no excuse to put it off till a more convenient season; Felix lost his time and soul by such a demur:‖ set about it while your spirits are warm: give not Satan advantage by delay: imperatives have no future tense, present despatch is essential to God's commands: anon, anon, at my leisure, is no obedience; now or never; there is danger in delays; "I made haste," saith David, "and delayed not to keep thy commandments."§ Remember his holy resolution in a weighty matter of the like nature, for settling God's worship, Psal. cxxxii. 2—5. Your spirits will cool by delays, Satan will get advantage; some have confessed that the holy Spirit hath departed from them, upon their not yielding to his dictates, and they have run into the dead sea of profaneness by degrees, if you miss your opportunity you are undone: you may die before morning, if you go prayerless to bed, and where will you be then? You

* Psal. cxli. 2. Neh. i. 6. Dan. ix. 8, 9.
† Exod. xxxiv. 6. Prov. xviii. 10. ‡ Psal. lxxxiv. 9.
‖ Acts xxiv. 25. § Psal. cxix. 60.

have no lease of your lives; you must not say to your neighbour, "go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give:"* and will you say so to God? O do not put off God in paying his dues, either, as to a first undertaking or after-performance: beware of delays, and make no intermissions; he that is not fit to-day will be less fit to-morrow.†

4. Excite yourselves and families to the performance; it was the practice of the primitive church, to have one to say before prayer, Up with your hearts.‡ Alas! our spirits grow dull in the intervals of duty; you must stir up yourselves to "take hold on God;"‖ you must wind up your affections, and tune your spirits as you would do the strings of an instrument, and you will find they will quickly slip down again; twice did David say, "O God, my heart is fixed;" yet immediately he found it unfixed again, and cries, "Awake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early."§ You will be forced to give your hearts a check many times in a duty, if you make conscience to maintain them in a good frame: hence those expressions of "watching unto prayer," and "watching in prayer;" as well as "watch and pray."¶ O take heed of doing the work of the Lord negligently! serve not God with that which costs you nothing: but do your best in every duty. "Be you fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."** Be in good earnest, as if this were the last prayer you were to offer: muster up all your forces, excite your graces, rouse your affections to and in the exercise, then you will pray better and better.

5. Take a proper season for family worship; it is a great fault to put off family prayer and make it the

* Prov. iii. 28. † Qui non vult hodie, cras minus aptus erit.
‡ Sursum corda. ‖ Isa. lxiv. 7. § Psal. lvii. 7, 8.
¶ 1 Pet. iv. 7. Col. iv. 2. Matt. xxvi. 41. ** Rom. xii. 11.

last thing you do; it will not be so seasonable to go down upon your knees, when you are fitter to lie down in your beds. Our Lord saith of his sleeping disciples, "the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."* But alas! some there may be in your families that have not a willing spirit, and would rather be at rest, than wrestling with God; Eutychus might be a pious man, yet attending at an unseasonable hour, he dropped asleep,† which Calvin saith, might be in some sort excusable, for it is no wonder, if having struggled against sleep, at such an unseasonable time, at length he was overcome:‡ he concludes that he had not composed himself to sleep, because he chose an unfit place to sleep in, being in a window, and it must be ascribed more to natural infirmity than wilful fault; but by this instance masters should learn to take fit times for family worship; not when children and servants are tired out with working; if it be attainable, go to prayer before supper, when your spirits are most brisk and lively; drowsy devotion brings guilt on the person and family, especially if it be through imprudent management; it is a proper time for duty morning and evening, when the family come together to their stated meals.

6. Let family worship be performed when worldly business can be best laid aside: "one thing is needful;"‖ beware of encumbering yourselves with the many things of the world. I hope I need not bid you order the members of your family to lay all other works from their hands, but you must endeavour that (if possible) their hearts be also taken off from all other employments, that they may "attend upon the

* Matt. xxvi. 41. † Acts xx. 9.

‡ Quid mirum si nocte intempestâ cum somno luctatus tandem succubuit?—*Calv. in loc.* ‖ Luke x. 42.

Lord without distraction ;"* not that masters can pretend to govern the inward man, but that they may so despatch and dispose of worldly concerns under their cognizance, as to leave both themselves and families, as little occasion of diversion as may be; therefore must you take such times for religious exercises, as may be freest from business. Solomon saith, "Through desire a man having separated himself seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom."† Man's mind is but finite, and cannot be intent on several things at once; you must mind religion in your worldly concerns, but if you mingle worldly concerns with your religious duties, you mar all.

7. Be short and serious: be not ordinarily long, lest you be judged tedious: consider the infirmities of children, and some family occasions and conveniences: weaklings of the flock must not be over-driven, lest they faint or tire in the way: children and servants have but a measure of regard, especially if yet in an unrenewed state: they will soon be ready to say, "behold, what a weariness it is,"‡ and when will the duty be over? Perhaps they will even fall asleep, or seek diversions, or take occasion to be absent: not but that it is their fault, only you may give them occasion: yet though you may be short, you must be serious, run not over duties cursorily, or in post haste, as if longing for the close of a task; you must be warm and lively: our Lord's prayer was short, but expressive and full of earnestness; "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."‖ It is not length of speaking, but strength of desire that God looks at: yet a longer prayer is not unlawful upon some special occasion, or upon more

* 1 Cor. vii. 35.
† Prov. xviii. 1.
‡ Mal. i. 13. Amos viii. 5.
‖ Matt. xxvi. 39.

than ordinary enlargement of affections. But what I now say, is in a stated course of family duty: be short, comprehensive, distinct, methodical, and pathetic, in your devotions.

8. Let not guilt stop your mouths. If you have in the intervals of duty, been drawn into any sin; oh! be sure to get it removed, before you wait on God in your families; retire into a secret place, confess thy sin, bewail it, act faith on the mediator for pardon; yea, suffer not guilt in thy family, let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles, for then thou shalt lift up thy face without spot. If thou indulge sin in thyself, or in thy family, conscience will stare in thy face, and weaken thy confidence in thy approaches to God.* Guilt had shut David's lips, till it was pardoned, therefore he prays, "O Lord, open thou my lips."† An unsuitable carriage, provokes God to withdraw assistance; then what can you do? and as guilt stops your mouths, so it opens the mouths of others. They will be ready to say, it is no matter how you pray, except you practise better. Your servants and children will be ready to despise you, and withdraw from you, and so produce confusion in your family, which will hinder prayer; but if your lives speak for God, as well as your lips, you may say as David, "So shall I have to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in thy word."‡ Then you may hope he will not take the word of truth out of your mouth. Let there be a sweet harmony formed by your professions, prayers and practices, and then God will hear you, men will own you, and your own consciences will witness for you.

9. Familiarize holy conversation with your families, and put the members thereof upon secret duties. If your relations never hear a word of God, or religion

* Job xi. 14, 15. † Psal. li. 15. ‡ Psal. cxix. 42, 43.

in intervals of family exercise, that duty will be strange to them, and they will but judge it as a formal course, and yourselves will have less heart to the performance. If God be never in your thoughts all the day, you will but coldly pray at night, nay, it is well if you be not like the wicked man, that through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; why so? The text saith, "God is not in all his thoughts," or as it is the margin, all his thoughts are, "there is no God;" *wicked* is here a collective word, for he speaks not merely of one person, but indefinitely of all, saith a good interpreter, for such is the nature of man, when he is destitute of God to govern him.* And if God be not in your thoughts, he will not be in your words, for "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh;" and who will believe you are in earnest, when your lips are sealed up in silence; tell your wife, children, servants, at due seasons, of the preciousness of souls, the necessity of grace, excellency of Christ, the awfulness of eternity, the near approach of death, the great account of judgment, and the importance of watching and prayer. And put them upon going alone by themselves, and praying as well as they can. And as such discourse will familiarize these solemn truths and duties to them, so it will make them willing to join with you in family worship. If you will not own God before your relations, sure you will not own him before enemies. Gordius the martyr, being advised to keep his mind to himself, oh! no, saith he, it is fit that this mouth of mine, which was made by God, and for God, should speak of God, and for God.

* Psal. x. 4. Impius hoc loco nomen collectivum est, neque enim de una tantum persona loquitur, sed indefinitè de omnibus. Talis est hominum natura quando destituitur gubernatore Deo.—*Moller in loc.*

O friends, will you take your leave of God, in the morning or evening sacrifice, and never acknowledge him, till the return of that family service? God forbid; are not the souls of yours committed to you? must you not give an account of them? and is not faithful speaking to them for God, one way of discharging your trust? profess your subjection to the gospel, and your example may prevail on all about you, for God is much glorified thereby.*

10. Observe answers of prayer, and gather up experience. As this will furnish you with matter of prayer, so it will help you in the due manner of engaging in it. How did the Lord assist my heart in such a duty? what quickenings? what meltings? what communion with God? what further degrees or strength of grace, did I obtain in such a performance? what power against such a corruption? what strength against temptation? what further ability or encouragement in and for God's service? Or make your remarks upon your family, what person is informed, reformed, conformed to the ways of God? what convictions or impressions have I observed, on the spirit of such a child or servant? what miscarriages to be reproved or bewailed? what evils have been prevented or removed? consider how the Lord hath blessed or prospered your undertakings, that God may have the glory, and yourselves may have the use or profit of what you have met with in your families. David saith, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; in the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up;"† the words are very emphatical, first, his great care and exactness so to order, direct and compose, both his person and prayers in such a manner,

* 2 Cor. ix. 13. † Psalm lxxxv. 8. v. 3.

as to be well pleasing to God, "Then will I stand as a watchman, upon my watch tower, to consider what answer he will give me; the altar which I have made, shall be my watch tower, at which I will stand to expect some blessed answer; to ascertain what help the Lord will afford me:"* by this means you may adapt yourself to the circumstances of your family, and not proceed at random, and always find matter from things daily occurring, to present before the Lord; yea, and those very occurrences, will excite suitable affections of joy and sorrow, to quicken you in prayer or praise. This is what Solomon prescribes in Prov. xxvii. 23, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds;" whether it refer to a literal inspection of shepherds, in a proper sense, or metaphorical in a political as magistrates, or ecclesiastical as ministers, or economical as governors of families; it is a great duty in all respects;† but it properly and principally belongs to householders; else how can you accommodate your counsels, and admonitions to them, or petitions for them, or your sympathy or compassion? Thus I have despatched my instructions, both preparatory for erecting this family altar, and also have prescribed the due manner of performing this family worship, both with respect to matter and manner.

And now you cannot plead ignorance or want of direction. I have according to my ability reached out my hand to help you, your way is lined out, some have even written down words, and forms of prayer to assist you, and you have pious ministers, to whom you may repair for further direction, and if still you wilfully live in the neglect of this known duty, your

* אערך לך Disponam tibi, ואצפה est, speculabor instar speculatoris observaturus an venias mihi auxilio.

† Est præceptum œconomicum, saith Mercer.

blood be upon your own heads, the blood of your families, will also be required at your hands. God almighty make you willing and able to dicharge your relative duty. But if after all this, you will not speak a word to God, for your poor, languishing, perishing, dying families, to keep them out of hell, I leave you to that justice, which will shortly plead with you at another rate, than we poor ministers can do, and will take vengeance on you, for your wilful neglect, and disobedience to the calls of God.

CHAP. X.

A SOLUTION OF SEVERAL CASES OF CONSCIENCE CONCERNING THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN FAMILIES.

THE last thing I have in view, is to answer sundry cases of conscience, some of which have been proposed to me, and others are ordinarily connected with this point, concerning a family altar, and sacrifices in families.

1. *Query*, May a householder take upon him to preach, expound scripture, dispense the seals of the covenant, baptism, and the Lord's supper to the members of his family, seeing he is a priest?

Answ. (1.) Ministerial, authoritative teaching by order of others is one thing, and charitable, subservient teaching is another. A master of a family should teach all under his charge as a master, yet not usurp the office of a minister, without a due call:* his teaching must not be in opposition, but in subordination to

* Deut. xi. 18—21. Heb. v. 4.

ministerial instruction; as families are subordinate to churches.

(2.) Masters of families must not take upon them what they are not qualified for, or presume beyond their capacity, incurring the guilt of proud self-conceitedness, or vain ostentation, by undertaking to interpret the original, or give the sense of dark prophecy, or obscure scriptures, or determine knotty controversies. Yet they may declare, when it lies in their way, what they have read or heard from learned, pious men, or got in public preaching.

(3.) It is however safest, ordinarily to pass by those abstruse and difficult points, and insist upon plain, practical, fundamental, catechistical truths, or take occasions from the chapter read in the family, to employ such a seasonable word, suppose of admonition; as I have heard a pious father say, this is for you, look to it, this aims at you in such a case, and with serious exhortations press it home upon the conscience; or inform the ignorant on such or such a subject, requiring them to remember it.

(4.) But as for administering baptism and the Lord's supper, they may not presume to do it, this being an act of office. The one is annexed to Christ's commission, "Teach and baptize," and the other is the cup of blessing, which we, namely, as ministers bless;* and this they receive of the Lord; and are to deliver it to the people.† And I find several judicious divines affirming, that dispensing the seals, is peculiar to an organized church, and is proper only to ministers rightly ordained. For the Lord's supper is a symbol, and means of public communion, not of families as such; for though Christ administered it to his family, yet not as a family, but as a church. The judgment and prac-

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. † 1 Cor. x. 16. xi. 23.

tice of the primitive doctors and Christians, is a sufficient proof of this.

2. *Qu.* Is the master or govenernor of the family, always bound to perform family duty? May he not in some cases substitute another to perform that office for him?

Answ. (1.) It is incumbent upon the master of a family, as his proper charge; and it is fittest that he do it himself, if capable. David was a great king, and had much business abroad, yet returned to "bless his house," and put it not off to a chaplain;* Job was the greatest of all the men in the east, yet he acted personally in family worship.† I have heard of a nobleman in England, that though he keep a chaplain, yet to shew his authority and duty, voluntarily at some times himself prays with his family; this is well done.

(2.) Yet a chaplain may be employed, especially where the family is numerous, or when his gifts and graces are more taking and edifying, and he is likely to do more good than the master. It may seem probable, that some Levites were kept in some of the Jews' families, being oft reckoned with their sons, daughters, and servants, and it may be in some cases to perform these religious duties in the family; so idolatrous Micah, had his Levite chaplain, of which he too much boasted. ‡

(3.) Some have thought, that a wife in a family, may in some cases perform family duty, and that this honour may be given to the weaker vessel to do the office of religious exercise, as well as partake in the government of the family:‖ doubtless she is to pray: and it hath been judged by learned men that she may and must pray in the family with her husband's leave,

* 2 Sam. vi. 20. † Job. i. 3—5.
‡ Deut. xii. 12, 18. Judg. xvii. 13. ‖ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

and in her husband's presence, only she should cover her face with a veil, in token of her subjection. This they think is meant by a woman praying or prophesying with her head covered, not in the church where she was not to speak, but in the family when she performed that piece of worship,* and Calvin seems to incline to this apprehension, saying, the apostle requires this modesty of women, not only in the place where the church meets together, but in any grave assembly of matrons, or such as sometimes are in private houses: it is true he denies them liberty to prophesy in any other place, but I see no reason why an Abigail or a Deborah, may not at least be the mouth of a family to God. But I am not positive herein, and leave it to the consideration of others. †

(4.) And why may not a servant, or a steward of the house, such as Eliezer, Abraham's servant, or Obadiah, Ahab's servant, pray in the family? Especially in these cases, when the master gives him, not only liberty, but a call to that performance, yea, requests him to pray in the family.—When that servant hath gifts to qualify him for such a work, and is not exposed to the scorn and contempt of his fellows.—In case of the master's sickness or absence from home, or when more public necessary business engages him.—In case that servant be humble, submissive, self-denying, and know his place, and do it not with a kind of bravado, over his fellow-servants, or contempt of his master: and if in all things, that servant "shew him-

* 1 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

† Quanquam nec hoc malè quadrabit, si dicamus Apostolum hanc modestiam non modò in loco ubi tota ecclesia congregatur, requirere a mulieribus; sed etiam in quovis graviore cætu aut matronarum aut virorum, quales interdum in privatas ædes conveniunt.—*Calv. in locum.*

self obedient, according to his duty, 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

3. Another case of conscience is, when is the fittest time for the performance of family worship?

Answ. As to the time of prayer. I am really ashamed, when I read how often the Mahometans pray; it is said by writers, that they go seven times a day to their devotion; namely,—early in the morning—at sun-rising—at noon—betwixt noon and even—at sun-set—an hour after sun-set—and at midnight. O! be ashamed, you professed Christians, to be outstript by barbarous Turks!*

But as for the Jews, whom the primitive Christians imitated, their hours of prayer were borrowed from the times of their sacrificing, and were morning, which was any time before the third hour, Acts ii. 15. —mid-day, called the sixth hour, Acts x. 9, or about noon—evening, which was after the ninth hour, or about six o'clock at night, Acts iii. 1. Calvin thinks they did not go into the temple to pray, merely to comply with Jewish rites, but the better to propagate the gospel; yet asserts, that the church cannot want her regular discipline, and at this day, saith he, but that too much drowsiness prevents, it were profitable to have daily such meetings for prayer.† He means, in a more public manner: but for the circumstance of time, it is judged, that morning and evening are fittest seasons for family devotion: hence Calvin observes, that by this exercise, they were taught to begin and

* Weemse's Christian Synag. p. 85. David thrice, Psal. lv. 17. Dan. vi. 10.

† Inde colligimus non posse carere ecclesiam certâ disciplinâ, ac hodie, nisi obstaret nimius topor, utile esset quotidie habere tales conventus.—*Calv. in Act.* iii. 1.

shut up the day with prayer, and the worship of God.* I have hinted this before, and shall only add briefly a few directions.

(1.) You must be sure to pray for a blessing upon your meat at meals, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

(2.) Take your family at meal time to seek God, and read his scriptures, to sing God's praise, and to perform family duty, morning and evening.

(3.) Let it be a stated time, if possible, known to the family, that none may plead excuse for their absence: but that the whole family may attend.

(4.) Yet if some extraordinary accident intervene, you must not think yourselves so precisely bound to a time, as to be perplexed in conscience for omission, but take another more convenient time, which may more directly suit your occasions.

4. *Case.* Suppose the avocations of a housholder call him abroad about his lawful business, before the rest of his family can rise out of their beds, may he omit family prayer?

Answ. (1.) In such a case, he must go to prayer with such of his family as are risen, as it is likely some are to prepare him for his departure.

(2.) However, he must pray alone, committing himself and his family into God's hands, which the Lord may graciously accept.

(3.) He must double his diligence at his return, or at another time; and mourn for what he cannot mend. A good heart will lament any providential hinderance of communion with God.

(4.) But if possible, so arrange your wordly concerns, as not to hinder your family exercise, prudent foresight may be of great service here: but if your

* Hoc exercitio docebantur, ab invocatione et cultu Dei incipere diem et claudere.

calling be such, that this cannot be, do as the Israelites did, gather double the day or night before, two omers for a man or family,* lay in for the day following, what may stand you in stead by pleading with God, for what you will need.

5. *Case*, What posture is to be used in family prayer, and whether sitting be lawful?

Answ. Scripture tells us of several postures in prayer, as

(1.) Standing, Mark xi. 25. "When ye stand praying, forgive." The "publican stood afar off, and smote upon his breast;"† this was a penitent praying posture.

(2.) The eyes fixed upwards, "Jesus lift up his eyes to heaven,"‡ as we look a man in the face, when we speak to him: or in some cases, the eye may be shut, to prevent gazing or distraction.

(3.) Sometimes prostration, or laying the body on the earth, hath been a praying gesture, Abraham "bowed himself toward the ground;" but Joshua "fell to the earth upon his face:" our Lord also "fell on his face and prayed."‖

(4.) But the most ordinary gesture is kneeling, called bowing the knee: even king Solomon "kneeled down upon his knees, and spread forth his hands:" our dear Lord also, whose example is our rule, "kneeled down and prayed."§ Methinks we should not be too stiff to kneel before the Lord our Maker, before whom every knee must bow, either in devotion or destruction. All agree—That the gesture should be reverent before the great God—That bodily gesture should be such as

* Exod. xvi. 22. † Luke xviii. 13. ‡ John xvii. 1.
‖ Gen. xviii. 2. Josh. vii. 6. Matt. xxvi. 39.
§ Eph. iii. 14. 2 Chron. vi. 12, 13. Luke xxii. 41. Psal. xcv. 6. Phil. ii. 10.

doth best express the inward reverence of the heart—That the gesture be such as doth most quicken the heart, and help on in the duty—And, that it be such as gives a good example to others.*

As for sitting in prayer, it is an unbecoming, lazy position, especially if chosen, and in the beginning of a duty: indeed for weak frames tired out with other postures, some excuse may be made, but ordinarily it is not allowable.

Object. But is it not said of David, that he went in and sat before the Lord, 2 Sam. vii. 18, yet he prayed?

Answ. (1.) Some say, David was a king, and therefore might sit; according to the Jews' rule, "It is not lawful for any to pray sitting before the Lord, but the king."

(2.) Others say, the king "sat in dust and ashes," in an humble posture, "he fell on his face," say others.

(3.) This was more a meditation, than prayer, admiring the goodness of God: or he might first sit, and then kneel.

(4.) But indeed the word sitting, signifies David's constancy in meditating or praying; for a man usually continues longer sitting than standing: David sat, that is, continued longer before the Lord, and more familiarly with him, than ordinary.† It refers more to the composedness of his mind, than to the posture of his body: therefore let not this text patronize that sleepy position.

6. *Case* is, What place must we choose, or how must we use our voice in family prayer?

Answ. (1.) We are not bound to consecrated places

* Cum quis quærit orare, collocat membra sicut ei occurrit.—*Aug. de Orat.*

† יָשַׁב Mansit, restitit. Plus animo quam corpore sedit quietus coram Domino.—*Cajet.*

for the religious exercises of a family: in this you may use your liberty. In gospel times, God stands not so much upon the place of worship, as the character of the worshippers, and the manner of worshipping:* look at the frame of your hearts, as before described, and fear not reception wherever you be.

(2.) Yet the circumstance of place may be duly weighed, if you live amongst lions, mockers, scorners of religion, though you must maintain your profession of God's name in your families, as Daniel did, yet it is a disputable point, whether you may not sometimes retire from open violence into some private place. But there may be a greater reason for retirement than that, namely, to avoid the suspicion of hypocrisy and vain-glory, which was the Pharisees' great fault;† or you may withdraw into some distant place from the street, to avoid disturbance by hurries, tumults, and confusions that may distract you.

(3.) But let the place be so known to the family as that all may repair to it as an exchange, at the time of prayer, be it dwelling-house, parlour, or chamber; as Daniel selected some convenient room, called a chamber for his family devotion, so may you.‡

(4.) For voice, it is true God is an all-seeing Spirit, and men may speak to God, when they speak not a word, as Moses, Hannah, and Nehemiah; prayer is the movement of the will towards God, but in family prayer it is otherwise, men have bodies, and tongues, and ears, and cannot understand others' conceptions without a vocal articulate sound; what you pray must be audible, else they cannot join with you, or be edified by you; only see your hearts go along with your lips; and remember the saying of Solomon, "The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him

* John iv. 23, 24. 1 Tim. ii. 8. † Matt. vi. 5. ‡ Dan. vi. 10.

that ruleth among fools," Eccl. ix. 17. I know it refers to wise counsels, not prayers, but some may pray more affectionately with a low voice, than others with loud clamors; yea, possibly you may command your thoughts better in the former, than latter. See you be serious, and your voice audible and intelligible, not mumbling your prayers, so that your family cannot understand you or know what you mean.

7. *Case* is, Whether is a form of prayer lawful, or whether may a housholder use a form of prayer, or may others join with him in the use thereof?

Answ. (1.) Our most solid judicious divines among those called Puritans, do not judge forms of prayer absolutely unlawful; Dr. Preston saith, "I think there is none here that doubt, but that a set form of prayer may be used; you know, Christ prescribed a form—there were certain psalms that were prayers used constantly —still in all times the church had set forms; I know no objection against it of weight,"* &c. Mr. Hildersham, the oracle of his time, saith, "I dare not deny but a weak Christian may use the help of a good prayer book in this case; better to pray on a book than not to pray at all; certainly it is the spirit of error that hath taught the world otherwise."†

(2.) Yet these worthy men affirm truly that every Christian, even the meanest and weakest hath the gift and spirit of prayer, (so saith the latter of these worthies,) and must not "neglect the gift that is in him."‡ Dr. Preston saith, there is no man that hath any work of grace in his heart, but he is enabled in some measure to pray, without a set form of prayer. There was

* Dr. Preston's Saint's Daily Exercise, pag. 80—82.

† Hildersham on Psal. li. Lect. 12, p. 63. See 3 Arg. for forms.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

never any man in any extreme want, but he knew how to express himself, where he had liberty to speak.

(3.) But yet considering that some Christians, though truly gracious, may for a season be very unexperienced and incapable of opening their cases to God methodically, or in appropriate words, and considering it is before a family of which a man is to be the organ, and considering that unmeet and undigested expressions expose an ordinance of God to contempt; I would advise some Christians, before they pray with others, to premeditate, and duly weigh what they are to say to God, and think of a proper method, and some scriptural expressions, to produce them in prayer, as I have before directed.

(4.) As I doubt not the lawfulness of a member in a family joining with such a prayer, if the matter be sound and orthodox, so I question not but such a master as conscientiously useth this practice, will so increase in gifts and abilities, that in due time, he will cast away those crutches, and learn to go on profitably in daily family exercise, to the edification of all that join with him: so that in the diligent and humble use of these means, many disagreeable tautologies, and needless impertinences will be paired off, which offended intelligent ears. The worthy Dr. Preston saith, "a child that cannot go, may have a prop to help it; but we must not always be children, we must not always use that help."

8. *Case* is, If the householder or master is loose and careless, and possibly comes home, under the influence of liquor, yet will pray, though in no fit case for it, or he is unsound at heart, and prays but coldly or formally, may I join?

Answ. (1.) Thy acceptance with God, depends not

on the state of him that prays, nor on his zeal, but on thy acting of faith in Christ, if thou be upright in joining with the words, and endeavourest to lift up thy heart to God, the Lord may graciously receive thee, though the person praying may be rejected; "for every one shall bear his own burden, and give an account of himself to God."*

(2.) Yet if thou art convinced that the party praying speaks nonsense or blasphemy, instead of praying, thou art bound in conscience to shew thy dislike of it, lest God be dishonoured and offended with the whole family, the man hardened in sin, thy own conscience defiled, and thyself in danger of playing the hypocrite, in pretending to join with what thy soul abhors; in this case thou must withdraw, and get alone, and mourn over it.

(3.) And it is also thy duty, humbly and modestly to take a proper season to speak to thy master, as Naaman's servants did to him, when they saw him wrong, and you know it did good; and Abigail told her husband Nabal of his fault and danger, and "his heart died within him."† Who can tell what good such a word in season may do? he may think of it afterwards, Jonathan's advocating David's case, before his passionate father Saul, did good for a while.‡ If you come to a father or master humbly and submissively, not saucily and malapertly, you may win upon them, and if you can say little, yet if you burst out into tears for their sin, it may prove as convincing rhetoric to them as king Edward's weeping was to bishop Cranmer and Ridley, on denying his sister Mary liberty for mass; who said, "the king had more divinity in his little finger than they had in their whole body."

* Gal. vi. 5. Rom. xiv. 12. † 2 Kings v. 13. 1 Sam. xxv. 37.
‡ 1 Sam. xix. 5, 6.

(4.) If still there be no remedy, or reformation, though thou must not with cursed Ham, discover thy father's or master's nakedness, if otherwise it may be helped, yet thou mayest or must acquaint a pious minister, or christian friend, ask their advice, and if that be judged expedient, that they may speak to thy father or master, with as much secrecy as possible, and this runs parallel to our Lord's rule, Matt. xviii. 15, 16. Who knows but a conviction may fasten? and if he be obstinate, he will leave off his praying in a little time; for his sinning will make him give over praying, or his praying prevent his sinning.

9. *Case.* Suppose I be cast into a graceless and prayerless family, how must I do, or what is my duty?

Answ. (1.) Examine thy reasons and intention in coming thither; consider thy call, if thy parents fixed thee there as an apprentice, quiet thyself in God's disposal, make good use of this providence; if thou came thither voluntarily, without due consideration, be humbled for sin, beg pardon, make sure of a friend above.

(2.) Use all lawful means to remove into a more wholesome air. I say to thee as the apostle to a godly servant, "Art thou called, being a servant, care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather."* Methinks God saith to you as once to Israel, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men."† It is a wonder the ground doth not cleave in sunder, or some judgment come down upon such prayerless families.

(3.) Humbly propose some expedients for a remedy. See if any other member in the family will undertake that exercise, or whether the master will give you leave to pray in the family; and behave yourself so holily and winningly, that the good opinion of superiors

* 1 Cor. vii. 21. † Numb. xvi. 21, 24, 26, 31.

or equals may be a prologue and preparative to that performance.

(4.) If all this avail not for family worship, and necessity detains you there, as you love your souls, spend more time, and take more pains in secret; get into your cell, and say, Lord, have mercy on me,* as the old monk said to Luther; or as Jeremiah, "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride."† Pray for your own soul, that you may not perish with others; pray for the family, and all the members thereof, governors and governed; be not discouraged with their scoffs; who knows what the event may prove?

10. *Case.* If I be cast into a praying family, what use shall I make thereof?

Ans. (1.) Give glory to God, admire his wise and gracious providence; it is not the lot of all young people. Think, and say, Lord, who am I, that I should enjoy this privilege? this is a blessed place, a place of blessings; this fleece is wet with dew, when others are dry; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven;‡ blessed be God that hath cast my lot here.

(2.) Join in family prayer; be not needlessly absent, but do not content yourselves with bodily presence, or postures, but see to it, that your hearts also join with the expressions, else you play the hypocrite; and when you go forth, and set up families of your own, use the same practice, and with the same spirit of your pious masters.

(3.) Improve this stock of family prayers. A father may lay up an estate for his child in bills and bonds, which may prove a good portion. The corn sown in

* Abi in cellam et dic, miserere mei. † Jer. xiii. 17.

‡ Judg. vi. 37. Gen. xxviii. 17.

the field, is as good as that in the garner, in some respects better; the father sows, the child reaps a blessed crop. God forbid that I should lose a child's portion for want of looking after it. Lord, cut not off the entail of my father's covenant; O hear the many cries he sent up for me in my hearing!

(4.) Behave yourselves respectfully to that family where so gracious a providence hath cast you. God forbid you should be a scoffing Ishmael in an Abraham's house, a profane Esau in Jacob's, a rebellious Absalom, or an unchaste Ammon in holy David's family. You disgrace the ways of God more than others, when it shall be said, see what a brute was brought up in a praying family; you greatly discredit your privileges, and sink yourselves deeper in hell. God Almighty open your eyes, awaken your consciences, and reform your conversation, that you may walk worthy of God, to all well pleasing.

I have now done with this important subject of duly erecting a family altar, and offering gospel sacrifices to the Lord. And oh, that there were such altars set up in every dwelling house, and divine incense ascending like pillars of smoke heaven-wards.*

I have only a word of encouragement for timid, though willing souls, who set up family worship, but meet with so many discouragements from without, and within, that their hearts are appalled, and they are ready to give back, and say, will God accept such poor and imperfect sacrifices, so dead, heartless, and lifeles? I do no good, I get no good, I might as well give over, I am oft so wofully indisposed for duty, that I might as well let it alone.

O my friends! look on this as a temptation, and beware of it, strive against it, rouse up your spirits.

* Cant. iii. 6.

1. Consider, you are not the first or only persons that Satan hath resisted in duty; for even Joshua the high priest, a type of Christ, had Satan standing at his right hand, to resist him, and he had too much advantage against him; for, "he was clothed with filthy garments;" and our weakness is Satan's strength, our guilt his advantage; but our Jehovah saith, "The Lord rebuke thee."* The devil makes spots, and then accuseth us of our spots; but Christ wipes them away.

2. Our Lord takes well your good will to do, though you can do but little. The imprimis of a willing mind is accepted, though your following items be few and poor.† "The Lord is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,"‡ that is, those duties we perform to the Lord with labour and hard struggling. It is the observation of precious Mr. Hildersham,‖ "Think not," saith he, "beloved, that those prayers only are pleasing to God, wherein we please ourselves best, or which we perform with most facility and aptness of mind and speech; no, no, when we can perform this duty in obedience to God, even against our own disposition, and oppositions in our own hearts; these are the prayers that are most acceptable to God, as Abraham's obedience," Gen. xxii. 12.

3. By using and exercising little grace, improving small ability to pray, you will increase it, and will more comfortably carry on the exercise; so our Lord informs us, "To every one that hath," that is, by employing it, he shews that he hath, for otherwise the unprofitable servant had a talent also, "shall be given, and he shall have abundance."§ Sick persons, whose appetites are weakened, by eating provoke and recover

* Zech. iii. 1—3. 2 Cor. ii. 11. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.
‡ Heb. vi. 10. ‖ On Psal. li. p. 65. § Matt. xxv. 29.

them, one morsel alluring to another. You will find this true in spiritual things.

4. The weaker you think yourselves, and the more likely you are to depend on the right means of your acceptance, that is, the Spirit of Christ for assistance, and the merit and intercession of Christ for acceptance. For alas! you find you have no strong breeze of gifts to fill the sails, or height of enlargement to carry you with full gale to God; you are emptied, and your plumes quite fallen, as to any thing you do, and therefore conclude, you are too low to gain access to God, and your duties quite lost, except your persons and performances be accepted through the mediation of Christ.* I shall therefore conclude this whole Discourse with that delightful text, which is worth a world, without the the benefit of which, all our altars and sacrifices are ciphers, Rev. viii. 3, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.

* Phil. iii. 9.

THE

BEST ENTAIL;

OR,

DYING PARENTS' LIVING HOPES

FOR THEIR

SURVIVING CHILDREN,

GROUNDED UPON THE COVENANT OF GOD'S GRACE,

WITH

BELIEVERS AND THEIR SEED.

THE

DEDICATION.

To the Right Honourable Philip Lord Wharton.

My Lord,

THE concernedness your lordship hath for the worthy branches of your noble family, is demonstrated to all whom you esteem friends, by the constant solicitation with which you close your letters, *Remember me and my family in your prayers*, by which your lordship at once testifies your natural affection and true piety; your earnest desire of the best good, and the means by which that must come from God, even on the wings of believing prayer. Your lordship's request hath the force of a command; the obligations laid upon many hundreds both of ministers and people, extort from us, in point of gratitude, both many thanksgivings to God, and renewed supplications for your lordship, that the blessing of Abraham may successively continue in your noble family, that it may be blessed, and be a blessing. O happy family! where the precious pearl of covenant grace enamels the gold ring of worldly honour! It is true, the divine oracles say, not many mighty, not many noble are called. A good lady added, blessed be God, that it saith, not, *not any*. Once at least God will have an emperor, *a Constantine* saved. Augustine saith, a poor Lazarus is laid in rich Abraham's bosom. Sacred writ records a noble Theophilus, and an elect lady. And ecclesiastical history furnisheth us with a large catalogue of illustrious members of noble families, attached to the house of the Lord, which like fixed stars of the first magnitude, have shone bright in their proper orbits, and shed a heavenly influence among their inferiors. In which rank God hath placed your honour; whose morning star of early piety con-

tinues still shining bright to a good old age, and hath cast many resplendent beams of favour upon indigent persons, and spread the savour of divine knowledge amongst the ignorant: for which the loins of the poor, and souls of the instructed will bless you in this, and the other world. I doubt not, my lord, but your gracious spirit echoes to the dying speech of holy David, to whom a succession of piety in his seed was more eligible than of royalty and large revenues. What can be compared to this one comprehensive promise, *I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee:* yet this is the rich privilege of God's covenanted servants. Mines of gold, mountains of pearl, can bear no proportion to this one word, *my God;* This is light in darkness, life in death, a heaven in the midst of hell. The sense of this is the only cordial to the fainting spirits of God's afflicted children. Yea, saith one, if but one little drop of divine love, should fall into a lost soul in hell, it would sweeten or swallow up the bitter torments. And next to the privilege of God's being our God, his being our children's God claims the pre-eminence. For parents' anxious thoughts run out for their children's well being in this and another world. If God help us to own him, he will not forsake us or ours. It is true grace comes not by succession, yet oft in succession. The line of covenant love reacheth to many generations; and the more numerous pious predecessors are, the greater is the shower of blessings. So a learned man reads that paternal benediction of Jacob to Joseph, "The blessings of thy father are strong with the blessings of my progenitors;"* as the more waters run into one channel, the deeper it grows. Your lordship then may hope for multiplied and accumulative blessings on your noble progeny, if that be sound divinity, which was a maxim amongst the Jewish rabbies, that the divine glory rests on noble stems: however beams of love reflect with greatest lustre when descending on honourable personages. Therefore should we pray most ardently, for those of highest rank, as having the greatest capacity of doing most good; and a pious man, or minister, must not only with David, "serve his own generation by the will of God,"† but with the blessed apostle Peter, "endeavour that posterity may be able after their

* Gen. xlix. 26. † Acts xiii. 36.

decease to have divine truths always in remembrance."* This, my lord, hath been the great care of your honour; and as natural motions have more velocity towards the end, so the nearer your lordship approacheth to your centre and haven, the more sedulous and active are you to lay a foundation for religion in future generations; thereby also laying up in store for yourself a good foundation for the time to come, so laying hold on eternal life.† For the accomplishing of this great purpose, a poor inconsiderable worm casts his mite into my Lord's treasury, and prostrates himself at your lordship's feet, in this dedication, in testimony of my sincere gratitude for your unparalleled kindness and condescension to so humble a person. Withal recommending this small Treatise to your lordship, to encourage your heart, and strengthen your hands in God, under the painful breaches in your noble family; venturing it into a critical world under your lordship's auspicious name; not doubting a pardon for this boldness, and a candid acceptance; following it with my poor prayers, that it may obtain its desired success among the rising generation, and may excite parents to improve this blessed covenant; hoping that when your lordship hath filled up your days with grace, and your soul hath been transplanted into the celestial paradise; some of your seed will rise up in your room as plants of renown, to bear your image and name, and follow your gracious example while sun and moon endure; which is the daily prayer of,

My Lord,

Your humble and devoted servant,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

* 2 Pet. i. 15. † 1 Tim. vi. 19.

THE

PREFACE.

THERE is nothing in the world (I am very confident) lies so near the heart of a gracious Christian, next to the glory of God and his own soul's eternal happiness, as the spiritual good of his dear children; nature binds him to love his own: Christianity regulates and spiritualizes this love: fondness is not true love, but faithfulnesss: love to their bodies without love to their souls is nothing but animal attachment: it is like a doting on the casket, and throwing away the jewel, the soul is the man, the unseen part is the best part: where the soul is lodged, when parted from the body, there must the body lodge, in heaven or hell: oh that men understood and well digested this! surely they would not so unweariedly toil and exhaust themselves to get estates for their children, and take no care of their precious souls, and know not when they die, whether "he that comes after them will be a wise man or a fool:*" if he be a wise man, a little will serve him, with God's blessing: if wicked, he puts a sword into the hand of a fool to do himself and others a greater mischief. Oh, how much better is it for their own peace and their children's profit to plead the covenant of grace, to instruct, correct, admonish, counsel, comfort, and encourage their children in the ways of God, and use their utmost endeavour to make them God's children: an ancient thus writes: "God commands parents to hoard up discipline, not money for their children, things of a perpetual not perishing nature."† What a base and sordid thing is it to prefer a hog to a son! to provide for an animal and cast out a child! and yet most

* Eccl. ii. 19.

† Disciplinam parentes Deus jubet thesaurizare filiis, non pecuniam, perennia præcipit non peritura conferre.—*Sabrian ad Eccles. cath. lib. 3. p.* 441.

parents bestow more care on their cattle than on their children's souls: they give their children nature, but deny them nurture: yea, they propagate corruption to them, but do not travail over them till Christ be formed in them: they glory in being fathers of their flesh, but cry not to the Father of spirits for the best, the spiritual life of their children. They promise at their baptism, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but know not what that meaneth, and have no heart to learn, that they may teach. Oh what account will these perjured parents give another day? Remember, God will call you to account, what answer will you give, when he shall say? "Where is the child's soul, that I committed to thy trust? what care hast thou taken of it? where are thy tears, prayers, groans, yearnings of bowels for thine own? didst thou not know that thy child had a soul? that its soul was polluted with sin? that it must be born again not only of water but of the Spirit; or it could not be saved? that though I was to be the efficient cause, yet thou must be the instrument to begin and carry on this work, and hast thou done any thing in this concern by faithful endeavours? or hast thou earnestly desired me to do that for thy child which thou couldst not? thou knowest thou hast done neither, and therefore thy child's blood shall be required at thy hands." What apology wilt thou then make for thyself? Dost thou think to come off by saying, I sent him to school to learn, or to the minister to be catechised? this is more than some will do, but is this all? is not paternal care thy personal duty? wast not thou charged with thy child's soul? may not God justly blast other teachers' pains as a punishment of thy negligence? and doth not thy bad example at home counteract all that others teach them? Woe, woe, to such wicked parents!

In the name of God I charge you, as you will not have your children accuse and reprobate you in hell for ever, concern yourselves deeply about their everlasting state; think, they can never do well, if they do not well for another world: they will never be dutiful to you, till they be obedient to God: train them up for God, and you consult at once God's glory, the good of the church and commonwealth, your own comfort, and their eternal felicity: true grace qualifies persons for every con-

dition for he that is really good will be relatively good—a good king or subject, father or child, master or servant. Heathens knew this, that the way to form persons into a due mould of civil subjection is a literary and virtuous education: thus the king of Babylon conquering Judah ordered the king's seed and princes to be trained up in the learning of the Chaldeans:* and our own history tells us, that when the Romans conquered this island, Julius Agricola brought noblemen's sons to Rome, and caused them to be educated in liberal sciences, whereby they gradually tamed the furious temper of the Britons, so that the inhabitants here became of gentle spirit, and peaceable subjects: much more will Christianity and true piety bring persons into regular habits: it expels barbarity and produceth civility, hospitality, frugality, and yet a discreet liberality: a divine benediction is entailed upon sincere religion: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."† If your children be pious they will be fit for any thing, and all things will conduce to their good.

And you, O children, suffer a word of exhortation from one who hath had experience of childhood, youth, and riper age, and is arrived at old age, who hath been a teacher of others above forty years, and may say to you as Augustus did to his mutinous army, "Hear me, young men, whom once when young old men heard and obeyed."‡ God forbid you should be headstrong sons of Belial, yokeless, and so run headlong into the pit of destruction. Be not like the wild ass's colt, break not through parents' tears, prayers, counsels, and commands, to make your way to hell: alas! that any young persons should desperately withstand the persuasions of ministers, the suggestions of the Spirit, the checks of their own consciences, the sad warnings of their undone companions, and the rod of God on their own backs, and haste through all these to the pit, without ever stopping till they be swallowed up in that infernal lake which burns with fire and brimstone: you will say, what will you have us to do? I answer, act as rational creatures, enure yourselves to solemn consideration: consider that you are creatures of a

* Dan. i. 3, 4. † 1 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Audite me, juvenes, quem juvenem senes audierunt.

higher rank than brutes, that you have never-dying souls, that God made you to glorify and enjoy him; that he hath given you a rule to act by, in order to reach another state in another world, that sin hath depraved your natures, hath deprived you of God's image, and brought you under his curse; that Christ came to redeem sinners, that saving faith doth interest souls in Christ, and that faith is the gift of God; that in your baptism you were engaged to forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil; consider your sins since you were baptized, confess them to God, review and renew your baptismal vow, actually renounce all other claimants, and give up yourselves to the Lord, understandingly, deliberately, universally, and perpetually; regard Jesus Christ, as the way, the truth, and the life; espouse his interests; associate with God's people; obey all his commands; attend on him in all his ordinances; be sure you be sincere; exercise every grace; aim at perfection; keep a constant watch over your hearts and ways, maintaining a daily warfare against all spiritual enemies; prepare for death; and consider where you must lodge when the king of terrors lays his cold hand of arrest upon you; and make your accounts straight against that great reckoning day; especially be sure you put on Christ, and employ him as your advocate, that he may answer for you at that day.

These things I do but touch; for my great design is, to quicken and encourage parents on the behalf of their posterity; some of whom are left to themselves by the Lord to go astray, which occasioned Mr. Laurence's excellent Treatise on Parents' Greans; nor is it his case only, but many others also, some particular instances are fresh in our memory, which have brought some pious parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Some well known servants of God having never seen any hopeful symptoms of grace upon some or any of their children in their life time, and having on this account sad temptations to question the truth of God in his covenant; yet even in the very pangs of death they have embraced and clasped hard this blessed word, dying in the hopes of its efficacy for themselves and theirs; and the subject being recommended to me, was accordingly treated in a funeral discourse, which upon request, I was willing to transcribe, for the encouragement of poor afflicted

parents, who are bowed down with heart grief for their offending children. I confess the subject is novel and singular, and such as I have not seen any treatise upon: and having walked in an untrodden path, I hope I may obtain a pardon from God and man for any erratic movement, whilst the tendency is God's glory and the good of souls.

I hope none will reject this Treatise, because it seems a limited subject, as if they were not concerned in it, for as it is handled it extends to all, parents and children; yea such as have no children, are dealt with in this small Treatise, for their instruction and consolation. Such as it is I commend to believing, praying parents, following it with my poor prayers, that all the children of the covenant, may be covenanted souls, and that parents may be comforted with the grace of God in their posterity, and both may meet in glory; and if any reap and receive any advantage, I have my reward, and do humbly beg the incessant prayers of all that can pray,

For the poor servant of Christ and the church,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

DYING PARENTS' LIVING HOPES

FOR THEIR

SURVIVING CHILDREN.

---

2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

These words contain dying David's living comfort. The covenant was the only cordial to his fainting spirits; when the world looked dark about him, here light ariseth out of obscurity; just as it was with Oecolampadius when dying, and putting his hand on his breast, he cried, here is light enough:* so like David, a believer looking above, sees all good in the covenant; looking within, he sees the counterpart of it, and saith, here, here alone is light, by his light I walk through darkness.† This shall be my *vade mecum*, my companion through this pilgrimage of the world, and this only shall be my *viaticum*, my support and supply when I pass through the valley of

* Hîc sat lucis. † Job xxix. 3.

the shadow of death. Farewell, empty, polluted world, welcome the immediate presence of my covenant God; I am going from a prison to a palace, from sorrow to solace, from sin to the sweet enjoyment of God; and the only foundation of my hopes is this gospel covenant. A poor dying miser, ready to breathe out his unhappy soul, got a Jacobus piece of gold, and clapped it to his breast saying, "I will die with this cordial at my heart;" but at last plucked it away saying, "it will not do, alas it will not do." No; gold itself is no cordial, it cannot disarm death, nor arm against it, it loses its virtue; nothing but God's covenant will stand in stead; the dying child of God is like the standard-bearer, who when the battle was lost, wrapped himself in his colours and therein was safe, he marches boldly through armies of enemies, uninjured into his father's palace. O happy soul that enjoys and improves this covenant!

The context tells us, that these are the last words of David, not absolutely as though he breathed his last, after he had uttered them (for there were several expressions and transactions after) but comparatively, they were uttered towards the latter end of David's life. Now the dying words of pious men are gracious, serious, and ponderous; they use not to spend their breath about trifles.

In the context, we have, *the introduction*, and *the excellency of the gospel covenant.*

First, In the introduction we have the *penman*, instrument, or amanuensis, who spoke these words, David; and the *Author* who dictated them.

1. The penman or instrument, David, is described by his *natural* descent, "the son of Jesse;" his *royal dignity*, "raised up on high;" his *divine unction*, "anointed of God;" his *employment* or *exercise*, "sweet

Psalmist of Israel," whose breath is sweet to this day.

2. The Author that dictated to David: *The Holy Ghost*, "Spirit spake by me; *God the Father*, "the God of Israel;" *Jesus Christ*, the mediator of the covenant, called here "the rock of Israel," as he is called, 1 Cor. x. 4.

Secondly, In the expressions which David employs, there are also two things considerable: *the nature of David's government*, and *the excellency of the covenant.*

1. The former which unfolds to us the nature and properties of David's kingdom, as the type, and of Christ's as the antitype, contains four particulars.

(1.) The *holiness* of it, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God;" a fine character.

(2.) The *happiness* of it, "he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds."

(3.) The *increase* of it, "as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."

(4.) Here is an uncomfortable exception with reference to David's family and kingdom, in these words, "Although my house be not so with God."

2. Here is an excellent description of the nature, properties, and suitableness of the gospel covenant, in these four particulars: The *durableness* of it, "everlasting;" the *order* of it, "ordered in all things;" the *sureness*, or certainty of it; and its *suitableness* to David's circumstances with respect to his present desires in this world, and his eternal salvation hereafter.

You see the text is a full storehouse, a rich treasury, a blessed magazine, whence we may fetch both meat

and medicine, work and reward, all things that concern grace and glory.

The text then presents to us David's case and his cure. His case is presented negatively, "Although my house be not so with God." And his cure positively, which is "the covenant," that is a balm for every wound, a remedy for every disease, a supply for every want.

I am not ignorant, that some give the words a different sense, in this manner, "Although my house be not so with God," that is, my house is not such an unstable, inconstant thing, to alter and change as the weather, from a glorious sunshine morning, to a dark, cloudy, gloomy evening, so as to prove a stormy, rainy day; no, no, my house and family is fixed, settled, splendid, and complete, if not in my outward affairs at present, yet in the Messiah to come out of my loins in the fulness of time; his kingdom will appear, and shine most gloriously, and break in pieces all other kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever; so we read, Dan. ii. 44.

But though that be a great truth, I am apt to incline to those interpreters, that take this as a concession, concerning the defects and imperfection of piety and tranquillity in David's family, as if he had said, I must needs confess, that neither I nor my children have lived so exactly, or ruled so uprightly in the fear of God as we ought; we have had our faults and folly, which have clouded our consciences and reputation, and therefore we have not enjoyed such uninterrupted prosperity as we might, had we walked more closely and circumspectly, and therefore sad clouds and storms have darkened and disturbed our heaven, yea oft benighted our state, domestic, political, and ecclesiastical, as well as personal; my children have not been like tender grass, springing up to maturity, but some of

them cut off in the prime of their days; I have been banished from my throne and family, not suffered to build God a house, nor abide in his sanctuary, my wounded spirit hath sighed out many heavy groans, God hath oft withdrawn his grace, hid his face, and left my soul on the brink of despair; yet for all this I can, when most depressed cast my eye upon the gospel covenant, and fetch relief from that in my lowest state, inward or outward.

Many inferences may be drawn from this important passage of scripture.

1. That it is a singular mercy to be entrusted with a family. This is implied and owned by David, 1 Chron. xvii. 16—25. God setteth the solitary in families, Psal. lxviii. 6.

2. Householders must regard the state of their families. So doth David here, and Psalm ci. 2, 3; he had a large family, and had state affairs on his hands, yet he prays with his family, 2 Sam. vi. 20, and puts it not off to stewards or chaplains; see Prov. xxvii. 23.

3. A religious family is to be with God. "Although my house be not so with God," he earnestly desires all the members of his family might be with God, and laments the contrary, for the Lord is with them that are with him, 2 Chron. xv. 2.

4. The best families have their defects and imperfections. David's family for all his care, may be far from the rule, not only as to individual members, but as to the complex body of a family; there were disorders even in Christ's own family.

5. Family faults bring family calamities, family defects produce family afflictions. God will not spare offending families, though dear to him, nay, they shall smart soonest and sorest, Amos iii. 2, "You only have

I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you."

6. Family miscarriages do greatly trouble gracious householders. He speaks of it with painful feelings. O what bitterness is it to a godly father or master, to find disorders in such as are under his charge!

7. The covenant of grace is extensive and comprehensive. Pious persons have much comfort and content from it, with reference not only to themselves, but their houses and families.

8. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It is from all eternity, being connected with the covenant of redemption, betwixt the Father and Son, Tit. i. 1, 2; and endures for ever, Psal. cxi. 9.

9. There is a beautiful and admirable order in the gospel covenant. An order of persons, in the Father's election, the Son's redemption, the Holy Ghost's application, and the believer's reception. An order of things; supreme, and subordinate causes; means, instruments, promises, privileges, principles, and practices; all keep their places, they do not interfere or thwart one another.

10. The gospel covenant is sure and stable. Things are not left at uncertainties, nor do they depend on the mutable will of man, as of old it was with Adam; but they are the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. 3, and liv. 9, 10.

11. There is that in the covenant which answers a Christian's desires. As the Christian's desire is mainly carried towards it, so there is that in it which answers and satisfies those desires; desires are vast and immense, but the blessings of the covenant run parallel, and are every way adequate to just desires.

12. A Christian's salvation is wrapt up in the gospel covenant. Upon this may a child of God venture

his soul. Eternal life is contained and comprehended in it.

I wave all these, and shall consider the text in a twofold light, in a domestic, and in a personal respect.

The former refers to David's house, the latter to his personal experience; this blessed covenant was David's chief relief, in both these cases: from the former observe,

That notwithstanding the sins and sufferings in a pious man's family which occasion much grief to his spirit, yet he is supported and satisfied with God's gracious gospel covenant.

From the latter acceptation observe,

That covenant relation is the foundation of a dying Christian's safety, satisfaction, and salvation.

It is the former observation on which I shall at present enlarge.

CHAP. II.

THE SINS AND SUFFERINGS OF FAMILIES OFTEN OCCASION THE GRIEF OF PARENTS.

THE principal point which I propose for consideration relates to David's family, for he mentions his house in the beginning of the text; and in the latter end of the verse there is also a reference to it, "although he make it," that is, my house, "not to grow," that is, to increase in number, power, or honour.

The former part of the verse is variously rendered, כי לא כן ביתי עם אל. Nor is my house so great, or of

so much worth with God.* Alas, what is my house at best, my pedigree is without distinction. David disdains not to reflect on his humble origin, though advanced to the culminating point of civil and spiritual promotion, as a king and prophet: he magnifies God, and degrades, yea, nullifies himself, 2 Sam. vii. 18, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Others thus, there is more in the covenant than this my house before God.† All the families in the world amount not to so much as one Messiah, he, he only is the noble flourishing branch springing out of my family, who is worth us all, who conveys life and vigour to us all, this is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of its roots,‡ and they shall hang on him all the glory of his father's house;‖ my whole family would fall into ruin but for him, on whose behalf it must be upheld, that he may be born in it; yea, who only upholds it.

Others thus; although my family and kingdom be not so holy, as to perform the conditions of the covenant so exactly as God requireth, though we are guilty in many respects before God, and he hath scourged us sore, yet God's covenant is the ground of my hope for my family, and I doubt not but my Lord will make it good.§

And what David saith of his family, any child of God may say of his, except in the peculiar case of the Messiah springing out of his loins. Thence we may safely derive this

Doct. That notwithstanding the sins and sufferings in a pious man's family, which occasion much grief to

* Nec tanta est domus mea apud Deum.

† Plus est quàm hæc domus mea ante Deum.—*Chald. Jon.*

‡ Isa. xi. 1. ‖ Isa. xxii. 24. § Quamvis non sit ita.

his spirit, yet he is supported and satisfied with God's gracious gospel covenant.

In handling this point I shall

I. Premise some things proper to be known.

II. Give the proof of the point.

III. Answer a main objection.

IV. Make a short application.

I. The things to be premised are these: What may befall a godly man's family? Why these are a grief to his spirit? What is the covenant that supports him? What is in the covenant to bear him up?

A little may be advanced on each of these.

First, What may fall out in a pious man's family which may occasion his grief?

I shall mention these two things in answer:

Corruptions breaking out, and afflictions breaking in on his house; sin and suffering, and indeed suffering is the proper fruit of sinning.

1. Corruption may break out in pious families; I shall not need to instance in Adam's, Noah's, Abraham's, Isaac's, or even in Jacob's, Aaron's, Samuel's, &c. I shall keep to David's. Alas, corruption broke out sadly, both in himself and in his children.

(1.) David was guilty of sins of omission, possibly not instructing, restraining, or not punishing Amnon and Absalom, and not crossing Adonijah, 1 Kings i. 6. David was too indulgent for which he smarted.* He was also guilty of foul sins of commission; as adultery, and the murder of his faithful servant Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. 4, 27, rashness towards Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. xix. 29, sometimes lying, changing his behaviour, &c.

(2.) His children too were deeply guilty, Amnon of incest, Absalom of rebellion, and Adonijah of ambition,†

* 2 Sam. xii. 9—12.

† 2 Sam. xiii. 10—14. xv. 1. 1 Kings i. 7.

Alas, that there should be found such gross abominations in pious David's family, yet this was not his case only; it is said of Samuel, that his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment, 1 Sam. viii. 3.

2. And what a flood gate of troubles did these sins open, which gushed in upon him, deep called to deep, all God's waves and billows went over him,* remember David and all his afflictions, saith he, how numerous, how ponderous!† some of his children dying in the height of their career, by the visible hand of justice, one died in infancy to punish his iniquity;‡ besides foreign enemies; he had a gloomy morning, noon, and evening, what bloody wars with Saul and his house, with Philistines and Ammonites! what sad tragedies, insurrections, commotions, and confusions, threatening a total extirpation, so that David might call some child Beriah, as Ephraim did because it went evil with his house, 1 Chron. vii. 21—23, and so it hath done with many a good man's house.

Secondly, Why are these breakings out of sin, and prevalence of sufferings in their families, such a grief to pious householders?

With respect to the first, it must needs trouble them.

1. Because by sin God is greatly displeased, his name much dishonoured, religion discredited, the hearts of genuine believers saddened, the wicked scandalized and hardened; motes in professors are beams, are mountains in the eyes of profane; what will they say? they are no better than we, what are they but a pack of hypocrites? to what purpose is all their whining and praying? Our children conduct themselves as civilly as theirs, where is the covenant

* Psal. xlii. 7. † Psal. cxxxii. 1. ‡ 2 Sam. xii. 14.

they boast of? Hence David, Psal. xlii. 3, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God?"

2. They are greatly afflicted with the sins of children, because the beloved of their souls are endangered, they are pieces of themselves, as their own souls, how can I endure to see my own flesh scorched, and tormented in eternal flames? Oh! shall the child that came out of my loins be separated from God, a companion with devils, a fire-brand in hell? the mention of it sinks my spirits. Is all my labour lost? shall the soul of my child perish? Oh! who can endure to think of it? no wonder if that be the first of Solomon's Proverbs, chap. x. 1, "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." Yea, he frequently repeats it;* other afflictions lie on the back, this goes to the heart, see Rom. ix. 1—3.

3. Consciousness in parents of their own guilt, makes children's miscarriages more uneasy and afflictive. Oh! I read my sin in my child's folly; alas, omission of due instruction, admonition, or correction hath brought my child to this, I may thank myself, I have taught my offspring by my bad example, I have not watched over them, prayed for them, or been so jealous of them, as to offer sacrifice for them continually, as I find Job did, chap. i. 5; who can tell, but if I had been faithful, I might have prevented all this? Oh! my child's sin brings my youthful vanities to my remembrance, thus I dealt with my father, to this pitch I arrived, God hath punished my sin with my child's; I am verily guilty, this cuts deep, Jer. iv. 18.

4. The affliction is heavier because it doth in some measure weaken the confidence of parents in the covenant, and endanger their faith in the promise. Pious

* Prov. xv. 20. xvii. 25.

parents are ready to say when a child is born or baptized as Samuel of Eliab, surely the Lord's anointed is before him,* this is a lovely child, I hope this may honour God in his day, but the child grows up, and degenerates, answers not expectations, but grows depraved and hopeless, old in sin though young in years; and now the pious parent's hopes are dashed and impaired, he is put to a stand, and knows not what to think or say, but concludes sadly, with the two apostles in another case, I trusted that he would have been one that should have been an honour to God, a comfort to me, and a blessing in the church;† but oh how am I disappointed! he proves the greatest affliction I have, oh what is become of the covenant? have I not some reason to question either God's faithfulness, or mine own interest? This was the temptation of holy David, with whom the covenant was made expressly and immediately, Psal. lxxxix. 20; God even gives him all the assurances imaginable, his word, his oath, ver. 34, 35; yet ver. 49, he saith, "Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?" A sad expostulation, as if God kept not his faith with David; why, what is the matter? the reason was, because providences ran counter to promises; crosses seem to make void God's covenant, ver. 38—46; "but thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed," &c. Alas, David, where is thy faith? But so it is, sense prevails in the best saints above faith at some seasons; but most of all in this case, when the children of the covenant cross the purposes of the covenant? and no doubt this becomes a great grief of heart to a believer, when he is thus sadly nonplust; till the light of the covenant rightly understood un-

* 1 Sam. xvi. 6. † Luke. xxiv. 21.

riddle this mystery, the poor Christian is in great perplexity. David had a promise by Samuel that he should be king, yet saith in his heart, I shall certainly perish one day by the hand of Saul.* Why so? why, his present danger seemed to be incompatible with the performance of that promise, and though he said in his haste all men are liars;† yet when he came to himself, he would undoubtedly fret and vex himself, that he should so wrong himself and Samuel, yea, and cast such an unworthy reflection upon God himself, as though he were unfaithful to his promise. Thus will a good man do at last, but at present he is upon a strange rack, tortured betwixt hope and fear.

CHAP. III.

NATURE OF THIS COVENANT, AND WHAT THERE IS IN IT TO SUPPORT THE CHRISTIAN.

THIRDLY, It would be superfluous to say much of the nature of a covenant, yet take this short description of it.

A covenant is a voluntary, mutual compact between two parties, containing benefits to be enjoyed, and duties to be performed.

1. It is a compact between two parties, for though a single person may make a promise, yet a covenant is between two or more, and parties formerly at a distance: this is the case between God and man, so Gen. xxvi. 27, 28.

2. It is a mutual, reciprocal compact, both parties must be engaged, therefore it is called the bond of the

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. † Psal. cxvi. 11.

covenant, Ezek. xx. 37; because though they were free before, yet now they are under obligation.

3. It is a voluntary compact, both parties were free before they were obliged by covenant. Covenanting is an elective act, God is a free agent; nothing but pure love induced him to covenant with man, Deut. vii. 7, 8; and though man was not absolutely free, being God's creature, and therefore bound to his Creator, yet his actually entering into covenant is a voluntary act, Psal, cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing or volunteers in the day of thy power."

4. Between those who have entered into a covenant engagement, there is mutual obligation to confer benefits, and perform duties, called the *habenda* and the *agenda*, things to be conferred by God, and received, by man, and duties on man's part if he expect any benefits from God, Isa. i. 19. "If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."

Yet in the covenant of grace between God and man, there are two things peculiar:

1. There is an interposing mediator, our blessed Jesus, the days-man that lays his hand on both.* Now, saith the apostle, a mediator, is not of one, but God is one, Gal. iii. 20; that is, his business is to reconcile parties not only distinct but different.

2. This mediator is also surety or sponsor, to undertake for both parties, that is, to perform what is necessary, both what concerns conferring benefits on God's part, and performing conditions on man's part; not formally, as though Christ did believe and repent for us, to save us the labour of repenting or believing, but meritoriously, purchasing these graces for us, and efficiently working them in us, thus Jesus is made a surety of a better testament, Heb. vii. 22; he brings in everlasting

* Job ix. 33.

righteousness, and makes God at peace with us, and all his attributes favourable to us, and employed for us; working also gracious dispositions and virtues in us, which are the conditions of the covenant, so the whole lies upon Christ, and "he is all in all;"* he is responsible for God and man, being alone able and capable, as God and man, to fulfil necessary engagements on both sides; thus God promises what he requires, and gives what he promises; Jer. iii. 19, "But I said, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? and I said thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me." *Thou shalt*, here is God's undertaking, to give a filial disposition and perseverance. O infinite condescension of divine goodness and free grace!

An eminent divine observes,† that the gospel relating matters of fact, is a history—declaring terms on which God will be served, is a law of grace—discovering promises of life conditionally, is God's covenant—and as accepted by man, is a mutual covenant between God and man. This law and covenant of grace, which was obtained by Christ's death, is that legacy he left to the world, dispensed by his ambassadors, and effectually conveyed to the legatees, or heirs of promise, by his grand executor the Holy Ghost. This then is the great security of man's salvation, "That God worketh in us, both to will and to do; that we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation."‡ This is the excellency of the gospel dispensation of the new covenant; the old covenant laid all the stress on the shoulders of mutable man, and therefore it is judged, that the covenant of God made with Adam in innocency, was peculiar to

* Col. iii. 11. † Mr. Baxter's Directory. ‡ Phil. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 5.

him in that estate and went no further, and that it is not continued in any force since the fall, for "if there had been a law given, which could have given life, then righteousness had been by the law," Gal. iii. 21; but it is by the gospel covenant that we are justified and saved.

Perhaps it may be said, what is all this to the purpose? All this seems to be personal, not relating to posterity, but you told us, that there were grounds of hope for children from the covenant. How come children to be interested in this covenant?

This leads me to the fourth thing premised, namely, What is there in the gospel covenant, that is ground of encouragement to parents on the behalf of their children?

I answer, in general, parents and children are legally one party, and in civil contracts they usually stand in the same circumstances; so in the first covenant Adam being a public person, represented all his posterity, for "judgment was by one to condemnation, even upon all men;"* we suffer for Adam's sin. And under the old testament dispensation of the covenant, God saith, Gen. xvii. 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations." And afterwards in the days of Moses, when God renewed the covenant, he saith Deut. xxix. 14, 15, "Neither with you only do I make this covenant, and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day, before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day," that is, with their posterity, and so the people understood it, Deut. v. 3, "The Lord made not," that is, only, "this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us who are all of us here alive this day." And in the new testa-

* Rom. v. 16, 18.

ment, the apostle saith, Acts ii. 39, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children;" this is a covenant that passeth to successors.* Bargains, leases, and legacies may pass to children; children may also suffer for their parent's faults, a traitor's sons lose their father's inheritance.

Now we must look upon children in a double capacity: as children of heathens or Jews, Turks or infidels;—and as children of christian parents. Concerning the former we have little to say. It is of the latter we treat, and of these also—some are only by an external profession in covenant—and others are savingly in covenant with God; we can say little concerning the former, we insist chiefly on the latter; and of all these—some children die in infancy—and others live to years of maturity. I shall say a word or two of the former, though it be the latter that I principally have in view.

With respect to children dying in infancy, if one or both of the parents truly fear God, we can state the following grounds of hope for their salvation: for,

1. They are holy, 1 Cor. vii. 14, and though this may mean federally or relatively holy, yet they may also be partakers of real holiness.

2. Our Saviour saith, of such is the kingdom of God, or of heaven,† Matt. xix. 14, not only such as have the disposition of children, but infants themselves may be members of the church invisible here, and glorified hereafter.

3. Children of pious parents are in covenant with God, "Now to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made," Gal. iii. 16, natural as well as spiritual; it is true there was a covenant of peculiarity to give his seed the land of Canaan, and it is as true, the

* Fœdus ad successores transiens. † Mark x. 14.

text speaks not of seeds but one seed, that is Christ, but the Scripture affirms, that in his seed, Christ, yea, "in thee," saith God, addressing Abraham, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3, for so doth the apostle interpret and apply it, Acts iii. 25, "Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant, which God hath made with our fathers."

4. David had good hopes that his child was gone to heaven, 2 Sam. xii. 23, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Observe (1.) He doth not mean only into the state of the dead, where the child is, but into heaven where I shall find him, for his body was but part of him, and the least part.

(2.) This hope he had of him, though the child was the fruit of adultery.

(3.) Though the child was struck with death, as a punishment of David's sin.

(4.) Though the child had not yet circumcision, the seal of the covenant, for "he died on the seventh day," verse 18, and we know that circumcision was not to take place till the eighth day.* The stress, then, it seems, is not laid on the seal, but on the covenant; so that we see grounds of hope for the eternal salvation of the infants of believing parents. But how and whence this comes to pass, that such infants become capable of eternal salvation, is a difficult question.

Luther thinks that infants have actual faith, from Matt. xviii. 6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me." So reason is in infants in its principle, root, or habit, virtually though not yet actually produced.† Others say—that they are saved in some peculiar, unknown, unspeakable way without faith. Others are of opinion, that the faith of

* Gen. xvii. 12. † Tanquam in principio et radice.

parents is also that of children, according to the tenour of the covenant; "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed;" thus children in some sense have faith. So the text saith, Rom. xi. 16, "If the root be holy, the branches are also holy." So in human laws the father and the heir are but one person; of this opinion was Mr. Perkins,† and he produceth the testimony of the ancients, as St. Augustin and Bernard saying, it is meet, and for the honour of God, that to whom age denies their own faith, grace should grant to them that benefit by the faith of another. Bellarmine's objection, "That in this way children would be born believers, and so be conceived and born without original sin," He answers thus: "Believing parents sustain two characters, one considered as men, and thus they procreate children, having man's nature with all the corruptions of nature: the other as they are holy men, and believers, and thus their infants are not so much their children as the children of God; and infants are God's children, not by virtue of their birth, but in consequence of their parents' faith, which entitles them to all the blessings of the covenant." Thus he.

But this is not the subject of our present design and consideration.

† Perk. vol. 1. fol. 486.

CHAP. IV.

SOURCES OF HOPE WHICH PARENTS DERIVE FROM THE COVENANT FOR THEIR ADULT AND SURVIVING CHILDREN.

II. THE next thing to be done is to establish this doctrine, That notwithstanding the sins and sufferings, breaking forth in a godly man's family, or breaking in upon it, which occasion much grief to his spirit, yet he is, and hath reason to be supported and satisfied from God's gracious gospel-covenant.

I am very sensible that I have undertaken a difficult task, and walk in an untrodden path; but this I may confidently affirm, that whatever befalls a believer, he may fetch all good out of this blessed treasury: for—either his children shall be laid hold on by converting grace—or not: if they be, O what cause will he have to magnify covenant love on their behalf! if not, still he will exceedingly adore covenant grace, on his own account, which hath made him to differ, and in the worst case will find something in the covenant for supporting his spirit, and sanctifying his bitter cup of affliction, in the death of children. As to this latter, I shall say nothing but refer you to a treatise of Mr. John Flavel's, called the "Balm of the Covenant," applied to the bleeding wounds of afflicted saints.

But my present business is to gather up some gracious promises, like flowers, out of the garden of scripture, which may refresh the drooping hearts of God's poor children, sorrowing for the miscarriages of their children, that they may turn them into prayer, or use them as a cordial to support them, till the Lord shine upon the souls of their beloved offspring.

In general observe, that as the covenant of grace is a blessed constellation, so every promise is an orient, refulgent star, to shed both light and a cheering influence on the weary traveller, amidst dark and dismal dispensations, wherein he is appalled with sad fears that his child will be a cast-away.

The question is, what grounds of hope in the scriptures have pious parents, for their children that are grown, or growing up and likely to survive or outlive them? The resolving of this is of exceeding great importance, and having searched the sacred records, I do find twelve sorts of promises that may encourage the hearts of parents.

1. The first and chief promise is of God himself, Gen. xvii. 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This extends both to Abraham's natural seed, and afterwards to his spiritual seed, all Gentile believers, Rom. iv. 12, 18. O what a privilege is this! whatever God is, hath, or can be or do, is for believers, of all that is communicable, divine power, wisdom, goodness, mercy, holiness, justice, is the portion of believers, and their seed, whatever they can ask or expect from a God, shall be in due season, laid out in them and for them; this one word is the substance and confluence of all good, temporal, spiritual, eternal; *My God* is the most extensive and comprehensive word in the world.* What can a man desire more, and no less will give a gracious soul content for himself and his seed; no less is in the covenant, Jer. xxxi. 33, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord," Psal. xxxiii. 12. God in some sense may be the God of nations and families, as well as in-

* Deus meus et omnia.

dividuals, and if some boast of pedigree, wealth, honour, a numerous offspring, or worldly prosperity, yet let David reckon up the epitome, the sum total of man's felicity, he will thus conclude, "happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psal. cxliv. 12—15. Happy parents that bequeath such a legacy to their posterity, though they should leave them in poverty.

2. Next to that and as a means to enjoy God, is the promise of Jesus Christ, the mediator of the covenant. Isa. xlii. 6, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." It is true, God vouchsafed to the Jewish nation this privilege, that "of them as concerning the flesh Christ should come;"* but they cannot monopolize this glorious gift, for now in Christ Jesus, "we who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ;"† and poor Gentiles laying hold on the covenant, are become free denizens of all Jewish privileges that are essential to salvation, for "we are all one in Christ Jesus;"‡ and promises are "to us that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39; even in Christ himself, "in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in him, Amen."‖ Nor can any man have an interest in any one promise for himself or his seed, without an interest in Christ; there never was or can be any covenant between God and man since the fall, but through Christ; he then that hath Christ, hath something to plead for his children more than another hath; he only "is all and in all for ourselves and ours;§ and they shall hang on him all the glory of his Father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity," Isa. xxii. 24. All believers are God's family, and by faith in prayer, they may freely hang upon him their off-

* Rom. ix. 5. † Eph. ii. 13 ‡ Gal. iii. 28.
‖ 2 Cor. i. 20. § Col. iii. 11.

spring, that is, children, grand-children, the smallest and least of the vessels that are in their house, he will not reject them, but graciously receive them; himself will take infants into his arms, as himself being an infant, was taken into old Simeon's arms, and both old and young are blessed by him. O happy parents that lay their surviving seed in so kind a bosom! they cannot miscarry that have Christ for their guardian.

3. Another legacy that parents may leave their children, are the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the blessed Trinity. Isa. xliv. 3, 4, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." There is no interest in God or Christ, but by the operation of the Spirit: the Holy Ghost proceeding from Father and Son, teacheth believers all things, convinceth of sin, reneweth the will, begetteth faith, uniteth the soul to God, filleth the empty vessel with divine gifts, graces, influences, and comforts; * all the good things of heaven are conveyed into the soul by our Lord's substitute; the Spirit assisteth, quickeneth, enlargeth, supporteth, and satisfieth; yes, saith the Christian, I have had much experience of the Spirit's help in my own soul, but what reason have I to hope for the like to my children? Look on the text again, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed:" it shall not come on them by drops, but be poured on them abundantly: they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, see the full promise in Joel ii. 28. accomplished, Acts ii. 17, 18, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." It is true there is something in that promise arbitrary and extraordinary,

* John xiv. 16, 26. xvi. 8, 13.

suited to that dispensation, but something there is also common, permanent, and essentially necessary to true christianity, which God makes good to believers and their seed in all ages. O happy children! that have "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion and communications of the Holy Ghost," 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

4. Children of believers are rightful heirs of all gospel privileges. I may in a sound sense say of them, as Paul of the Jewish church, Rom ix. 4, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." There are two sorts of privileges for them:

(1.) External, as the ordinances: they being born within the pale of the visible church, have the prayers of God's people for them. As the children of Abraham had "the seal of circumcision, at eight days old;"* so children of believers are baptized, being disciples of Christ,† and thus have God's sheep-mark set upon them betimes, and are taken into his peculiar protection; and growing up, and owning their baptismal covenant they enjoy.

(2.) Those essential privileges that accompany salvation, as reconciliation, adoption, justification, and are in a fair way to eternal salvation, for they lie in the road of free grace, under the droppings of the sanctuary, where the Spirit is wont to breathe the breath of spiritual life; if any be proper heirs of God's special care, and ordinances, surely it is the children of God's people, Psal. lxix. 35, 36. "For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah:" who shall have the benefit of this salvation? He answers, "the seed also of his servants shall inherit it, and they that love

* Rom. iv. 11. † Matt. xxviii. 19.

his name shall dwell therein." Parents have prayed for the church's deliverance, and their children shall reap the fruit of their prayers, so Psal. cii. 28, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee:" there is a double mercy here, first, in restoring ordinances, and then in vouchsafing this privilege to the children of believers. O what would a child of God give to know that his posterity should see better days? You have it in the promise, and may have it in the performance, if you reach out the hand of faith to receive it, for yourselves and yours.

5. Children of believing parents are converted to God by ordinances. Psal. cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," that is, in dispensing powerful ordinances, "in the beauties of holiness," for holiness is full of glory, "from the womb of the morning," that is, from the beginning of Christ's entrance upon his kingdom, "thou hast the dew of thy youth," that is, those young people of the seed of the faithful that shall be born to the Messiah, resembling dew for quality and number, and the wonderful manner of generation. But a plainer text we have in Isa. xxix. 22, 23, "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale," through the loss of good blood, or death of the pious; "but when he seeth his children the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name." O blessed sight! to behold God's image and workmanship in the souls of our children! this is far better than to behold our image upon them: God's picture is drawn by his own hand, with the pencil of his word and Spirit: the discovery of this will raise high monuments to the glory of free grace. "Lift up thine eyes," saith God, Isa. lx. 4, 5, "thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters

shall be nursed at thy side:" I know it means Gentile converts, and it is so much the more of concern to us. Another text saith, "They shall bring thy sons in their arms,"* with great care and tenderness, as nurses carry young infants in their bosoms that they be not hurt. O what a fine sight is it to see converts flocking to Christ, and into his church, "like doves to their windows or cotes!" † the Seventy translate it, "as doves with their young ones unto me." You may hope for your children's saving conversion, having those encouraging promises.

6. Pious persons' children may and shall be useful instruments of public good to the church of God, Isa. xlix. 17, "Thy children shall make haste," or as others render it, "thy builders:" and her children were her builders, as we read in Ezra and Nehemiah. That is a glorious day, when destroyers are gone, and the the church's children build Zion's temple and walls; but so it shall be, Isa. lviii. 12, "And they that shall be of thee," that is, thy children spiritual or natural, or both, "shall build the old waste places, thou shalt raise the foundation of many generations." Is not this worth something to have blessed instruments of reformation raised out of your loins, as magistrates or ministers? how did it gladden David's heart, that his son Solomon must build God a house, 2 Sam. vii. 13, "He shall build a house for my name." David echoes, verse 18, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?" And what if a Zerubbabel or a Joshua proceed out of thy loins? who knows but some of thy posterity may be raised up as pious ministers to convert sinners to God? hope and pray, for all things are possible with God, and thou hast encouragement from the covenant.

* Isa. xlix. 22. † Isa. lx. 8.

7. Another encouraging word to parents with respect to their children is, that principles of grace and a profession of godliness shall continue to future generations, Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." This is a large and long-lasting charter; God's spirit within his children, and the owning of his name with their lips, and this for ever! What can godly parents desire more? Whether this spirit import a spirit of prophecy or a spirit of sanctification, surely it is a rich kindness, that it shall run in this straight line and channel to many generations, that the name of God, as well as your name may be kept up in your family perpetually when you are dead and gone; O happy parents that have such children! happy children that had such parents! and blessed be God that embraceth both in the bosom of the covenant! That is a soul supporting word in Haggai ii. 5, "According to the word that I covenanted with" your fathers, even with "you, when you came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you;" fear ye not, be not daunted, there were as many and great obstructions in the way of mercy then as now, yet grace overcame them, and I have not taken away my Spirit from you notwithstanding your multiplied provocations for two thousand years, but still it is among you and shall continue to many generations: may not faith triumph in this promise?

8. The children of pious parents shall excite particular observation, Isa. lxi. 8, 9, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and their seed shall be among the Gentiles," that is, Gentile churches, "and

their offspring among the people, all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Men shall say to each other, do you not see the faithful child of such a believing father? O how many a precious day have we had with such a one's father, mother, or grandfather! this is the pious child of a zealous father, you see it is not in vain to seek and serve God, I remember the prayers and tears poured out for his child, and I see the blessed fruit thereof; God is a prayer hearing God: of some children we may say, as Paul to Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 5. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." His grandmother's name was Lois, which signifies better, his mother's name Eunice, signifying victor, and Timothy is the fear of God. If parents choose the better part, God will give them victory over the world, sin, and Satan; yea, they shall have power with God, and have God-fearing children, in whom others will observe and admire the grace of God.

9. Children's children to many generations are remembered with covenant kindness: so in the second commandment, Exod. xx. 6, "Showing mercy unto thousands," that is, of generations, "of them that love me and keep my commandments.*" This is transcendent mercy, punishment extending but to three or four of them, verse 5; you will say, mercy and justice are God's two arms, is the one longer than the other? Answer, no, they are equally infinite, but he maketh his church to feel more of his mercy than of his justice, "with the Lord there is mercy," why so? because "with him is plenteous redemption," Psal. cxxx.

* Deut. vii. 9.

7. It is a covenant of grace, and Christ interposeth as mediator of it: O the overflowings of free grace to many generations! Psal. ciii. 17, 18, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." Mark it, it is called righteousness, to shew it is a discharge of his obligatian, by which he hath in some sort bound himself to parents to do good to their posterity, for it was mercy to Abraham to make a covenant, but it is truth and faithfulness to perform it to Jacob, and his rising seed many years after;* as it is founded in his eternal purpose, and continues to eternity; and this is the reason of our hopes for the calling of the Jews, because they are beloved for their fathers' sake, or rather because of God's covenant with their ancestors, Rom. xi. 27, 28. O what encouragement is this to parents that God will not utterly cast off their seed, but will resume thoughts of love to them at last!

10. God will restore the wandering children of his people by seasonable and sanctified correction;† Psal. lxxxix. 29—35, "If his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments," that is, if they forfeit the privileges promised, by non-performance of the conditions, "then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes, nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." God hath adopted affliction to be a branch of covenant affection; it is a promise, *I will visit*, not so much a threatening, for in faithfulness he afflicts his children; he will not take so much pains with a slave as with a son;† he will make his children thank God for a chastisement; Lord, saith a godly parent, bring home my child though it

* Mic. vii. 20. † 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Psal. cxix. 75.

be by weeping cross; starve my prodigal son, or feed him with husks, that he may reflect on his father's plenteous table; afflict his body rather than suffer his soul to perish; cast him on a sick bed, rather than cast him into hell; let his purgatory be here and his heaven hereafter. Now our gracious God answers his children's prayers; good Hezekiah's prayers for his extravagant son Manasseh were answered by God's taking him among the thorns, binding him with fetters, and carrying him to Babylon, till he had humbled him to purpose, and made him know that Jehovah was God, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—13. Doubtless the natural as well as the spiritual father of the prodigal will welcome home the child, though broken on the wheel.

11. The covenant engageth for a blessing on parents' instruction and correction of their erring children: this is of great use, (1.) For instruction, Prov. xxii. 6, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" there is the parent's duty, do thy duty to set him right in the beginning of his way, so some read it, "and when he is old he will not depart from it," that is, not easily, or ordinarily, as if he had said, if thou that art the father wilt do thy duty faithfully, I will undertake to do my part; set thou their faces in the right road, and I will keep them in it; I will bless thy instructions, admonitions, counsels, and example, see Gen. xviii. 19, God saith of Abraham, "I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him;" you will say, what is he better for that? they will choose whether they will obey or not; nay, God saith, but I will undertake for them, "and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." His labour shall not be in vain; I live, saith God, to make his words take impression on his surviving children, when he is dead? (2.) For correction you have a remarkable

promise, Prov. xxiii. 13, 14, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die," I will take care of him; "thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." O blessed scourging! surely such a scourge as fetcheth blood is easier than hell torments; but a benediction shall be upon that correction. That is a cruel parent, who would rather see his child a flaming faggot in the scorching fire, than try to whip folly out of him, that is cruel pity, better he should cry here, than wail hereafter, yea and curse thee for ever, who wouldst not speak a word or give him a tap, to prevent these intolerable torments. O the good that seasonable correction may do! if thou prevail not to make thy child good, yet thou wilt have comfort in the discharge of thy duty, there is good hope of both by the blessing of God, Prov. xxix. 17, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea he shall give delight unto thy soul;" yet take this caution, that these promises must not be understood absolutely, necessarily, and universally producing this effect, but ordinarily so it is, and this is a sufficient motive to parents to do their duty, and encouragement therein.

12. The last encouragement to parents from the covenant of God, with respect to their surviving children, is, that God will take care of their outward concerns in the world, Prov. xx. 7; "the just man walketh in his integrity, his children are blessed after him," if their father hath not heaped up riches by cunning and covetous devices, and so leaves them but little in the world, yet he hath left them in the hands of a good Father, who will take care of them, when their earthly parents are gone; for this blessed covenant is not confined to the persons of the pious, but entailed on their posterity, Psal. cxii. 1, 2, "Blessed is the man that

feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed." Correspondent with this, I call to mind an anecdote, told me by a reverend minister in London, who knew a poor and pious preacher in Wiltshire, that had many children, and little to maintain them, one asked him, how he thought they could shift when he was gone, he answered, I am not at all afraid about that, I am more afraid for them if they should ride up and down London streets in their coaches; which came to pass, for some of them came to be aldermen of that famous city. Our frequent experience confirms this truth, that God takes care of his upright-hearted servants' seed when they are laid in the dust; let us remember holy David's observation, Psal. xxxvii. 25, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." If there have been some few exceptions, yet these do not destroy the truth of a general proposition; howbeit temporal promises were more express and positive to the Jews of old, than to Christians in the times of the gospel, which consists more in spiritual things. But this will remain a truth that children of pious parents are usually provided for comfortably, even in things that concern this life, if it tends to God's glory, and their good, and if God see it good in his infinite wisdom, which limitations must always be annexed to temporal promises; but if they be poor, defamed, sick, in prisons, or banished, yet "all these work together for their good," Rom. viii. 28.

CHAP. V.

ANSWER TO AN OBJECTION AGAINST THE PREMISES.

III. ANOTHER thing in the general division of the doctrinal part, is an answer to a main objection, which is the following:

You have produced many promises as branches of the gospel covenant, that the children of godly parents, shall have converting grace, that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shall be theirs, that they are heirs of gospel privileges, that they shall be sanctified, and be useful instruments in the church, that they shall adorn their profession with a holy conversation, and if they should wander that God will restore them; that he will bless parents' instructions, and corrections, and take care of their outward concerns, &c.

Now do we not see by daily observation the direct contrary to all this, how many worthy ministers have had worthless sons? how many profligate children are there of gracious parents? nay, do we not see some children of pious parents miscarry more than others of their civil but worldly neighbours, more proud, scorners of godliness, companions of drunkards, swearers, debauched persons, who have proved a great dishonour to God, scandal to religion, grief to real Christians, and heart-breaking to their parents, have even so prejudiced the spirits of wicked men, that they say, this religion is but a fancy, praying so much is needless, and what is become of the covenant you so much boasted of? nay, have we not seen some children of pious parents live and die visibly graceless, under tokens of God's wrath, yea, hastening their death by intemperance and unbridled wickedness? how is this consistent

with all that you have spoken? how is God true to his covenant?

This is a sad truth, and cannot be denied, an awful consideration, which possibly hath staggered the faith of some, and strengthened the hands of wicked men against the power of godliness, and is too palpable an observation to be denied. But yet I hope to throw some light on this awful providence from the holy scriptures by proposing these seven considerations:

1. Some of the children of God's people can set their seal to God's faithfulness, in the covenant made to their parents and their seed; this illustrates God's truth and the goodness of religion. I doubt not but some children of the covenant can speak the language of Solomon, in 1 Kings viii. 23, 24, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like unto thee, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart, who hast kept with thy servant David my father, that which thou promisedst him, thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand as it is this day;" will not some stand forth and say, I bless God for pious parents, my soul hath found the benefit of their prayers, and the fruit of God's promise, I prefer this charter to all earthly privileges; let others say what they please, I will for ever adore free grace, that brought me forth under so good a covenant, it is better to me than to be born of a royal race, and being heir to a crown, "he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation, my father's God, and I will exalt him;"* and cannot one and another parent say, God hath "spoken well of his servant's house for a great while to come;"† behold I see the buds of grace in this or that child, and a saving growing work in another; blessed be free grace, I can

* Exod. xv. 2. † 2 Sam. vii. 19.

hold forth this token for good against all the cavils of profane spirits, and against my own unbelieving fears.

2. God never forsakes the children of pious parents till they forsake him; poor children run away from God before he turns them off, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, "If thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever." If Solomon, or any other child or children of a pious father, put on a cloak of religion, to please parents or accomplish a selfish purpose while they live, and cast off religion, and perversely turn their backs on God, and embrace wicked ways; without true repentance they have freed God from any obligation to perform his promise, because they have voluntarily discarded the condition on their part; now being at ripe age, when they are fit to make a choice, it is a voluntary act, proceeding from their own wilfulness, "You will not come unto me;"* and then it becomes a judicial act in God to forsake them, because they first forsook him; and neither they nor their parents can bring any charge against God for withdrawing from them that grace which they have abused, and which he is not bound to give them.

3. Parents have no reason to call God to an account for non-performance of the terms of the covenant, but themselves for their neglect of duty to their children; this is ordinarily the reason of their children's miscarriage: even pious parents are too apt to miss it, by over-fondness and negligence in their education, not admonishing, counselling, or correcting them; David had been too indulgent to Adonijah in not crossing him, and doubtless his conscience disturbed him for his ambition; this is a plain case, good Eli honoured his sons above God, 1 Sam. ii. 29, by permitting them to

* John v. 40.

dishonour him, choosing rather to offend God by connivance at their sin, than displease them by sharp rebukes, effectual restraints, and severe punishments, for as a father, and as a magistrate he ought to have curbed them: therefore God saith, "I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth of, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." O what secret twitches do the consciences of parents give them, when their children grow up and take not good ways! alas, I sinned against God, and now God leaves them to themselves; I have no cause to censure God, but condemn myself; God is righteous, their sin is a glass in which to see my own. Lord humble me, and convince them; O pardon my iniquity, that I may pray believingly for my offspring.

4. God may pass by the immediate descendants of his faithful children and work upon their more remote posterity: free grace sometimes runs under ground for a season and breaks out at a distance, a son is bad, but grace lays hold on a grandson; Jehoshaphat was a good man, 2 Chron. xx. 32, but Jehoram, his son, proved wicked, 2 Chron. xxi. 6; also Ahaziah, his grandson, walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, 2 Chron. xxii. 3, 4; Uzziah did right in the sight of the Lord, 2 Chron. xxvi. 4; and Jotham, his son, 2 Chron. xxvii. 2—6; but Ahaz, the next descendant, cast off the fear of God, 2 Chron. xxviii. 1, 2; yet electing love broke out again in good Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix. 2; it continued however dormant for a considerable time, and laid not hold of Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 2. Some even think his repentance was forced, and not sincere and saving; however the grace of God withdrew from Amon his son, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 22; but laid hold on good Josiah, his grand-

son, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. You see how grace passes over the head of one, and lays its hand upon that of another, yea, sometimes it crosses hands, and as Jacob guided his hands wittingly laying his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh, setting the younger before the elder, contrary to Joseph's desire and design:* so God crosses our natural affections and expectations, blessing such as we least thought of, and leaving others whom our hearts were most set upon, to convince us of the freeness of his grace: but thus his covenant doth stand sure.

5. Delays are no denials. God hath his time to bring in the prodigal sons of pious parents; the King of heaven can take what time he pleaseth to work on the hearts of men; Saul shall long persecute the church, yet become a chosen vessel. It deserves attention that the children of many pious parents sowed their wild oats in youth; even Jacob was guilty of many faults, especially of stealing the blessing by a lie: several of Jacob's sons had foul spots, Reuben and Judah were guilty of incest, Simeon and Levi of rash anger, treachery, and murder; yet all distinguished patriarchs: several of them combined out of envy to sell Joseph, whereby they almost broke their father Jacob's honest heart; but let not religious parents make too hasty conclusions; he that believes makes not haste; it may be God defers to hear because he loves your company, and would make you an errand to the throne of grace, your prayers are yet too cold, he thinks fit to quicken importunity: the answer will come doubly loaded, and pay for all your pains and patience; give God the glory of his wisdom, he knows how to husband your mercies better than you. It is worth observing that those women in sacred writ that waited longest for children

* Gen. xlviii. 14, 20.

had the best, as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, Manoah's wife, and Elizabeth. Indulge not despondency, you may see God's salvation before you die.

6. If God never shews mercy to your seed, you must not so much murmur at his justice, as bow to his sovereignty; he is the absolute disposer of his own grace; such an act of prerogative may be adored, but must not be questioned: the apostle Paul having gone as far as Scripture led him on the subject of God's casting off the covenanted seed of believing Abraham, and adopting the forlorn and forsaken Gentiles, stands on the brink of the unfathomable abyss, and cries, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"* The immensity and ineffability of these counsels are such depths! as he saith in Job xxxiii. 13, "He giveth not account of any of his matters;" they are oft unaccountable, but never unrighteous; kings have mysteries of state, not proper to be communicated to vulgar capacities,† and much more the infinite God; "secret things belong to God."‡ It is presumption to pry into God's ark, our weak eyes cannot behold this glorious sun: poor sinner, down on thy knees, and say thus to God: Lord, I will rather admire the riches of thy grace to my own soul, than quarrel with thee for not giving my child grace; it is an inscrutable depth, my humble ignorance shall stop at thy pleasure, my will shall be melted into thy will; if my offspring must glorify thy justice, I will acquiesce therein and say, though "clouds and darkness are round about thee, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitations of thy throne," Psal. xcvii. 2.

7. Yet for all this, religion must be owned and vin-

* Ω βάθος, Rom. xi. 33. † Arcana imperii. ‡ Deut. xxix. 29.

dicated, "God is good to the soul that seeks him;" to them "that wait for him."* He never said to the seed of Jacob, seek "ye me in vain."† If God never shew mercy to any of my descendants, yet I will never justify the wicked, by saying, "It is in vain to serve God."‡ No, God forbid, I will never say, that prayerless families are as good as praying families, my own experience, and thousands more, besides the infallible verity of the faithful God, will contradict that atheistical maxim. "In the keeping of God's commandments I have found great reward:"‖ yea, I have found that the miscarriage of my child, which is the greatest cross that ever I met with, hath been blessed for the good of my soul; as the good woman said, bearing my children and my crosses has cost me dear, but I could not be without either. It is not fit that I should choose my affliction, and what God lays on is welcome, I will esteem Christ no worse for his cross; for I find these bitter waters most medicinal, and the sweetest fruit grows on this bitter tree; the depravity of my child hath helped to make me better; this heart-breaking hath proved a heart-melting; it is true, wicked men are hardened by seeing the children of the covenant thus miscarry, even as divisions and offences amongst God's people, are occasions of their ruin, yea, the gospel preaching is the savour of death to some,§ but as God is just therein to them, so my soul hath cause to bless the physician of souls, that so tempers this poison, as to make it wholesome physic to my poor soul; my crosses are better than their comforts. I will commend religion, though I mourn over my irreligious child; godliness is gain, though I gain not grace for my child by it.

* Lam. iii. 25. † Isa. xlv. 19. ‡ Mal. iii. 14.
‖ Psal. xix. 11. § Matt. x. 34, 35. 2 Cor. ii. 16.

CHAP. VI.

THE SUBJECT CALCULATED TO PRODUCE CONVICTION AND HUMILIATION.

On a reveiw of what has been advanced the reflections I shall make, are intended to produce conviction and humiliation.

If it be true, that notwithstanding the sins and sufferings in a pious man's family, which occasion much grief to his spirit, yet he is comforted and satisfied with God's gracious, gospel covenant; then it follows by the rule of contraries that those families that have no right to this gospel covenant are in a dreadful state, have no grounds of comfort or satisfaction, no hopes of salvation; so remaining they are not under a blessing, but under a curse, Prov. iii. 33, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked;" the plague is in that house; set a cross on the door, and say, Lord, have mercy upon it; wicked families, read your doom, and a train of curses, Deut. xxviii. 15—19; you make a great reckoning of your estates, alas there is no covenant blessing on any thing you have, they are in themselves great blessings of God, but to you they are cursed, Mal. ii. 2, "If you will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart;" this is an awful, flaming declaration uttered against impenitent, inconsiderate sinners; not only their persons, but all their domestic concerns are under a curse; your meat, money, houses, wives, children, garments, employments, enjoyments, all that you do, all that you have shall be accursed; this is a heavy

curse; a curse uttered by man has sometimes operated long and dreadfully; Noah pronounced a curse on Ham's offspring, which never left them till the Canaanites were extirpated by Shem's posterity. *

The subject is important and affecting, I shall say something,

First, To irreligious parents, and then to irreligious children.

I begin with addressing parents within the bounds of the visible church. 1. Some understand not this covenant, they never set themselves to consider it; they bring their infants to be baptized according to custom, because others do so, and it would be a shame not to have them christened, neighbours would cry out against them; but they neither know the meaning of baptism, nor covenant, nor have they any mind to know them. 2. They take no pains to get their own souls interested in this covenant, but "are strangers from the covenants of promise,"† and so have no hope for themselves or children. We find great fault with prodigal parents that waste and alienate their ancestors' inheritance, which should have descended to their children, but it is a thousand times worse for parents, to cut off this blessed entail of the gospel covenant. 3. Most are negligent in doing their duty to children. Alas, how few will take pains to instruct them in the principles of religion, the nature, use, ends of the seals of the covenant, in praying for them, as if there were no such text in the bible, or they had never made such a promise, "as to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!"‡ Ah! wretched father, or mother, out of your own mouth are you condemned, who promise what you never intend to perform; how notoriously do you falsify your words, and betray your

* Gen. ix. 25. † Eph. ii. 12. ‡ Eph. vi. 4.

trust. 4. There are too many parents that are scandalous, profane, and atheistical, and teach their young ones to lie and swear, to be drunk and unclean, by the evil example they set before them. A child brought up with Plato, coming home, and hearing his father in a furious passion, could say, I never saw or heard the like in Plato. Alas, sirs, you lessen your esteem with your children by sinful courses, you bring guilt upon your family, yea, you do your endeavour to root out your family; "the seed of the wicked shall be cut off," Psal. xxxvii. 28. The whole Psalm, and daily experience testify the same. Ah sinner, "thou hast consulted shame to thy house,"* and some generations hence may reap the fruits of thy folly. The text saith, "God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him."† There are some hereditary sins, and some hereditary punishments bequeathed as a heritage to children; divines vindicate God's justice by proving that God may righteously punish sins of relations in their correlates, for children, say some, are portions of parents,‡ as people are the riches and strength of princes; yea, they have in them something of the parent, they are parts of them.‖ So David was punished in his child's death. But I shall not spend more time on this point, because so much has been said on it by many others.

How could you see your children perish in hell through your fault? How could you hear their cries, and see their torments in the infernal lake, gnashing their teeth, and with devouring flames about their ears, saying, oh wretched parents, that by your soul-destroying negligence, have brought yourselves and me into

* Hab. ii. 10. † Exod. xx. 5. ‡ Filii sunt res parentum.
‖ Aliquid parentis.

this lamentable state! why would you not speak a word to me, nor seek an interest in the covenant of grace for me, to prevent these eternal torments? that saw me go on in sin, and would not stop my course betimes, by faithful admonition and sound correction, nay, that set me a bad example, and were content that I should perish with you, cursed be the day that ever I should know such criminal parents, well had it been for me, that I had never been born, or had been brought forth a brute without a rational soul, that I might have died like a brute; I had even been comparatively happy if you my parents had put me to death, or like the heathen Thracians, lamenting my birth, had buried me betimes, and rejoiced at my death, because of the miseries of human life; but O I was born and brought up for the murderer, the murderer of souls; I had then gone as a condemned person, out of a dark prison to the place of execution, but now, having lived so long in the world, I have fought against God, and sunk my soul deeper in hell. Oh! woe is me, that I lived under such cruel parents, and as the dying person said, I am going to hell and my wicked mother must follow after.

And oh, the agonizing feelings of lost parents on the hideous outcries of the fruit of their own bodies! here neighbour's fare is not good fare, but the rich man's torments are aggravated by his fine brethren's coming into the same condemnation. Every shriek of the child will tear the heart of the self-condemning father; how easily, will he say, might I have prevented these despairing groans by a faithful discharge of duty! what if I had followed my wandering child with sighs and tears to God and instructed him while there was hope, but now all too late, all too late, the guilt of my child's blood is now required at my hands; had I scourged him so as to fetch blood at every lash, it

would not have been so dreadful as the lashes of divine vengeance; had I disinherited him for his faults, it would not have been so overwhelming, as my being banished with him from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; oh! what is temporary punishment to eternal torments; oh! that God would strike the hearts of poor, careless parents with feelings of pity towards their poor perishing offspring.

In the next place I would address graceless, irreligious children, grown up. It is no excuse for you to be bad, because your parents are bad, are you so wildly sociable as to go to hell for company? This is like the miserable Indians that leap into their parents' graves to be buried with them; or like the Italian, who on visiting his father's sepulchre, and washing all parts of the monument with lamentable tears, fell down dead; God may say, who requires this at your hands? But still it is worse to follow their pernicious examples, as too many children do;* you may reverence the memory of your ancestors, yet examine their dictates by the word of truth, and not be what the young novice entering into a monastery was advised to be, namely, like an ass, to swallow down all that comes.† No, no, you are redeemed from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, and therefore must inquire not simply for the old way, but which is the good way.‡ It is too much like what Cicero, the heathen orator, thinks a commendable piece of religion, to live and die in the religion of our ancestors. It rather becomes children to take warning by their fathers' sins and faults, and to avoid them and

* Progenies viperarum nominat potius quam viperas ut toti ordini exprobret virulentam malitiam; totum corpus damnare voluit.—*Calv. in Harm. Evan. in* Matt. iii. 7. Jer. vi. 16.

† Tu et asinus unum estote. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

their bad consequences. So God saith, "If the father beget a son, who seeth all his father's sins, considereth and turneth, he shall not die for his father's iniquity:"* but if you follow their sinful courses, you justify them, condemn God's ways, and destroy your own souls; yea, you bring upon yourselves the guilt of your fathers' sins besides your own; wicked parents are set before you as sea-marks, to avoid, not as land-marks, to guide you. The heathen orator said, parents are as household gods, their words should be as oracles;† but alas, they are only men, and may mistake and miscarry, but God in his word is an unerring guide: follow the Lord and you cannot do wrong or miscarry, but you may miscarry by following the best men, you will certainly miscarry if you follow bad men. The woman of Samaria erroneously pleads the place of her ancestors' worship;‡ and Jeremiah confutes the fond plea of the foolish Jews alleging their fathers' practices, Jer. xliv. 20—23.

But I shall rather suggest a few words for the conviction of the irreligious children of pious parents, who so degenerate from their ancestors, that it may be said as in Isa. lxiii. 16, "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not;" that is, as some take it, if our godly ancestors, Abraham and Jacob, were now alive, or raised up from the dead, they would not own us for their own legitimate offspring, we are so unlike them. I fear this is too true of the children of pious predecessors gone to rest, who tread not in their fathers' steps, but take a contrary course; their fathers prayed in their families, but the children have left off that practice; the fathers frequented religious societies, but the children frequent alehouses and bad company; the fathers walked closely with God, but

* Ezek. xviii. 14—18. † Θεοὶ Ἐφέστιοι. ‡ John iv. 20.

the children desert him and his institutions. Woe, woe, to such children!

1. They are perjured covenant-breakers, who in their baptism engaged to be the Lord's servants, subjects, and soldiers, and to fight under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and took listing money, but now have turned their backs on Christ, and fight the devil's battles against Christ. Woe be to such perfidious rebels; what is the doom of such as outrun their colours? is it not death? Covenant-breakers are ranked amongst the worst of sinners: amongst heathens, Rom. i. 31; and such as make perilous times in the latter days, 2 Tim. iii. 3. If it were but a man's covenant it is a great crime to violate it, much more this; the covenant of marriage is in some sense the covenant of God,* but this more immediately, and he will avenge the quarrel of his covenant, Lev. xxvi. 25. Oh sirs! how dare you look God in the face whose covenant ye have broken? What have you to do "to take his covenant in your mouths,†" when conscience flies in your face?

2. You have lost the benefit of your infant privileges; your infant membership was but calculated for your infant state; now you are grown up adult persons, you must stand for yourselves, and no longer your parents for you; now you must "live by your own faith;"‡ you must enter personally into covenant with God, repent, and obey the gospel yourselves, or else if thou be a breaker of this gospel law, "thy circumcision becomes uncircumcision;‖ that is, thy privileges are made void and insignificant: so God reckons the uncircumcised in heart with the uncircumcised in flesh, Jer. ix. 26; and saith, they were "as the children of the

* Gal. iii. 15. Prov. ii. 17.
† Psal. l. 16.
‡ Rom. i. 17.
‖ Rom. ii. 25.

Ethiopians unto him,"* and in the new testament it is repeated again and again, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God, faith which worketh by love, and a new creature."† You boast of your pious parents, as the Jews once did, and claim the privileges of Abraham's seed, but alas, you may be a "generation of vipers," as John the Baptist tells them,‡ and "of your father the devil," as our Lord saith, except you "have the faith and do the works of Abraham."‖ A famous family will avail nothing without personal piety; without holiness in your hearts and lives you cannot be saved; think not that God is bound, and you are loose; the covenant is mutual and reciprocal, you cannot expect the privileges without performing the conditions.

3. It is a distressing observation, and often proves too true, that if the children of God's people turn apostates they become the worst of men, and run deeper into sin, and further from God than many, yea, any others. The sons of good old Eli ran into unparalleled wickedness, 1 Sam. ii. 12, 22. We have many sad instances of Cain, Ham, Ishmael, Esau, Amnon, and Absalom; of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Manasseh, and few recovered, and with great difficulty. The tribe of Dan, Jacob's son, turned idolaters, and scarce ever returned to God, therefore are not reckoned amongst the "sealed ones," Rev. vii. 5—8; because they set up Micah's graven image, and had Jonathan, the son of Gershom, as priest to the tribe of Dan, and his sons after him, until "the day of the captivity of the land," Judg. xviii. 30, 31. The Israelites are said to overpass the deeds of the wicked,§ that is, of hea-

* Amos ix. 7.
† 1 Cor. vii. 19. Gal. v. 6. vi. 15.
‡ Matt. iii. 7—9.
‖ John viii. 33, 44.
§ Jer. v. 28.

thens; yea, they go beyond Sodom and her daughters, and change God's judgment more than the heathen.* The reason is clear, because they sin against more light, love, helps, means, convictions, pious examples, as well as a good education, and therefore are justly forsaken of God, and left to greater abominations. Oh tremble lest this be your case!

4. The children of pious parents may be cast into eternal torments. Abraham the father of the faithful may have a son lifting up his eyes in tormenting flames.† The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into "outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"‡ they that would not weep penitently here, must weep despairingly hereafter; they that scorned rebukes from parents, must have dreadful rebukes from God and conscience, their education was with saints, their conclusion with devils. There have many gone to hell with baptismal water on their faces. Baptized Magus must perish with his money; he was in the "gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity,"‖ and thus dragged to hell. Yea, the damnation of such sinners will be characterized with more vengeance than others; the worm of conscience will bite harder, being fed with more materials to strengthen her; the flame will be hotter, having more fuel; the higher men are exalted towards heaven, if they reach it not, the lower do they fall to hell, and in hell;§ if they plead their birth-right, as when a criminal pleaded that he was a gentleman, and the judge told him, he should therefore have a higher gallows; or as lord Sturton, who was hanged for murder in a silken halter; so must these well-bred persons be dealt with, the more they know of their master's will,¶ the more stripes are laid on

* Ezek. xvi. 47. v. 6. † Luke xvi. 24, 25. ‡ Matt. viii. 12
‖ Acts viii. 13, 20, 23. § Matt. xi. 23. ¶ Luke xii. 47

them; the more they glory in their privileges, the more misery in their loss, and the higher their hopes, the greater their disappointment; these are both hypocrites and apostates, whose sin and shame are more aggravated and augmented than others.* O what flaming faggots, and scorching oil, will parent's prayers, tears, counsels, admonitions, exhortations be to dissolute young men! when they shall see their parents glorified, and themselves condemned; read Prov. v. 11—13.

CHAP. VII.

INSTRUCTION MAY BE DERIVED FROM THE SUBJECT UNDER CONSIDERATION.

THERE are four classes of persons concerned in the doctrine under discussion, who may be instructed in their respective duties from it. *Children of uncovenanted parents, children of covenanted parents, persons married without children,* and *persons that have a family.*

A few words may be addressed to each of these.

1. There are some children attending on God in ordinances whose immediate parents were not in covenant with God, and knew him not. You may lay this to heart and lament it as your infelicity, but this is no bar to your reception with God; for how can you tell but some of your remote ancestors might be godly? or if not, grace is free, "those that come unto him, he will in no wise cast out;"† you may and must venture;

* Matt. xxiv. 51. † John vi. 37.

sinners of the Gentiles are grafted into the true olive, even contrary to nature, when they were wild by nature, so mayest thou be.* Jephthah was a bastard, thrust out by his brethren, but received by God.† Be not discouraged, though thou be sinful, and thy parents sinful, yet "God is no respecter of persons;" barbarian and Scythian, all are one in Christ Jesus; grace makes, but regards no difference.‡ And if the grace of God hath passed over others' heads to touch your hearts,

(1.) Adore the sovereign actings of free grace, give God glory, discriminating grace should have the crown set upon its head. I was, may one say, doubly polluted in my birth, from my first, and immediate parents. O what a privilege that I should be permitted to enter into the congregation of the Lord; § that God should receive me amongst his saints on earth, and give me hopes of heaven, O wonder of grace!

(2.) Be humble all your days, and low in your own eyes. Young professors are apt to be proud, but it ill becomes you of all persons to be proud, whom God hath lifted up from the dunghill, to sit with princes the king's children, read and apply, 2 Sam. vii. 18—20.

(3.) Make up your parents' deficiency by your own diligence, what time was lost in your childhood and youth, now redeem; the more ignorant your parents were, the more knowledge do you acquire; the further they were from God, the nearer do you get to him; the more disadvantages you have had, the more pains must you take for your souls, seeing it is of absolute necessity.

(4.) If God have laid hold on your hearts, be more laborious for the good of your families. You have had sad experience of the want of careful education,

* Rom. xi. 24.
† Judg. xi. 1, 2, 29.
‡ Col. iii. 11. Gal. iii. 28.
§ Deut. xxiii. 2.

let not your children have the same, but instruct them, pray for them, do what you can to bring them into covenant with God, give them not occasion to complain of your neglect also.

2. Children of covenanted parents, God forbid you should act contrary to your baptismal covenant relation, or act inconsistently with your obligations, that thorns should grow instead of lillies, or offensive weeds, where sweet smelling-flowers have been seen; it is dreadful that cursing should be heard, where prayers have been offered, or idle profane songs, where hosannas have been addressed to the King of heaven.

(1.) Review and renew your baptismal covenant. You were early devoted to God in minority, confirm it now at age; you took bounty money to be the Lord's soldiers, to fight against Satan, the world, and the flesh. Beg the graces and privileges exhibited and sealed in that ordinance, "regeneration, adoption, mortification, union to Christ, remission of sin;" say, Lord, didst thou promise before I could ask them, and now wilt thou not bestow them, when I am become an humble suitor for them?* I here produce thy charter, the deed of gift under thine own hand; thou didst in my infancy confer a right, give me now possession of it, let me know the seed was sown by the crop growing up, that I may at last reap the blessed harvest.

(2.) Repent for your breach of covenant. Alas, I have not come up to my vow in baptism; I have failed by omission, transgressed by commission, my conscience condemns me, God may justly censure me for transgressing his laws, changing his ordinances, breaking the everlasting covenant,† I have abused his kindness, rejected his gracious offers, neglected his worship, and

* Tit. iii. 5. Rom. vi. 1, 2. Gal. iii. 26. Acts xxii. 16.

† Isa. xxiv. 5.

God may justly draw up a black bill of indictment against me, pass sentence upon me, and execute it as against an apostate; but "Lord, heal my backslidings, love me freely, turn away thine anger from me,"* and deal with me according to the tenor of this new covenant.

(3.) Plead your fathers' covenant, prayers, and practice; "The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers, let him not leave us, nor forsake us;"† Psal. xxii. 4, 5, "our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them, they cried unto thee, &c." Blessed be God, the God of my fathers, that gave them a believing, praying heart, and signal answers of prayer; I will build on that foundation, and surely my Lord will not be worse to me than he was to them. How strong a plea this hath been accounted, see in David's case, 1 Chron. xii. 17; Jehoshaphat's, 2 Chron. xx. 6, 7; thus may you plead, Lord, my pious father was in many straits, and still he made thee his only refuge, and thou didst not leave him. O cut not off this blessed entail from me his child, be as good to me as thou wast to him.

(4.) Walk in the steps of your pious ancestors, plead and practice as they did, say as Moses, Exod. xv. 2, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him;" "God forbid that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers;"‡ "my fathers' friend I will not forsake" || by sinning or apostatizing, he never gave me occasion to withdraw from him, "what iniquity have my fathers found in God?"§ shall I disoblige an old friend, to gratify an inveterate enemy? no, God forbid, I will own, love, and serve "the God of my fathers for ever;"¶

* Hos. xiv. 4. † 1 Kings viii. 57. ‡ 1 Kings xxi. 3, 4.
|| Prov. xxvii. 10. § Jer. ii. 5. ¶ Acts xxiv. 14.

the God of my fathers help me to adhere close to my dear Lord in duty.

3. This doctrine concerns persons that are married, who yet have no children to pray and care for, and in this class, I shall also rank unmarried persons; both these may learn these four practical lessons:

(1.) Be sure you lay hold of this covenant for your own souls, be concerned for yourselves, if you have none else to care for, yet you have a great charge upon your hands; you are either gods or devils to yourselves; either God or Satan is with us, even when alone; yea, every man is the worst devil to himself,* "every man is tempted when he is drawn way of his own lust and enticed;"† your business is therefore to secure your best interests, whether you shall have children or not; and the only course is to lay hold on this gospel covenant; Isa. lvi. 4, 5, "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in my house, and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters;" mark it, you both secure your own souls and your name. How much is this better than Absalom's pillar, which became an eternal shame? You obtain honour for yourselves by embracing covenant terms, practising covenant duties, improving covenant promises, and spiritualizing covenant seals, believing in Christ the mediator of the covenant, being sprinkled with the blood of the covenant that you may enjoy covenant privileges; then shall your names be enrolled in the sacred calendar, and "written among the living in Jerusalem."‡ God and good men will esteem and honour you, yea, your name shall be had in everlasting remembrance; your memory shall

* Quisque sibi Satan. † James i. 14. ‡ Isa. iv. 3.

be blessed on earth, and your souls happy in heaven.* O how much is this better than sons to perpetuate your name? that is but a temporal, this a spiritual mercy; that common to all, this peculiar to saints; that uncertain, this fixed; that temporary, this eternal; be sure of this and you are happy.

(2.) Be humble and mortified. You are without children, they are an earthly blessing,† Psal. cxxvii. 3, 4, 5, "For children are the heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward, as arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of youth, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." These are not contemptible, though temporal mercies, you must not throw up the head, and say, tush, I care not, I have more ease, and draw a light arrow, I may take my pleasure, and make even with my estate, for I have no family of my own to leave it to when I die. This is perversely spoken, God would have you humbled under the want of children, though but a temporal mercy; God's servants have looked on it as an affliction. You may hereby take occasion to exercise repentance, and inquire what sin he is now punishing you for; thus you may make a virtue of necessity. Your deficiency of family may prove an increase of your graces; but beware of despising the blessing, or taking occasion of revelling away your estates; that is an extreme one way, as penuriousness is unreasonable in you on the other hand; both are sins to be avoided, and mortified; study Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry." Away with all licentious practices; live chastely, modestly, moderately, humbly, diligently in all circumstances.

(3.) Adopt some child or children, if you be persons

* Prov. x. 7. † Psal. cxxviii. 3, 4.

of any estates; this is Mr. Paul Bain's advice, "they must, saith he, not revel with their substance, nor must they live like idle persons and busy-bodies for want of employment, but they must save the matter of their estate, and depute some as adopted children, and be helpful in educating others;" thus he. Adoption hath been used in all civilized nations, and it is "a passing legally out of one family into another."* And amongst the Romans it was done either by the pretor or by the people; that which took place through the pretor was called adoption; that which was through the people was called arrogation. They had many formalities about it, needless here to be recounted. But by this means you may have children whom you may account as your own. You rich men, to whom God hath denied the fruit of your bodies, have you no near kinsmen, or poor neighbours to whom God hath granted a lovely offspring? surely it would be acceptable both to God, to them, and yourselves, to select an ingenuous child, to help him to learning, to train him up for God, to make a trial of him while you live, and to bequeath your estates to him; so may you have comfort of him, and he may bear up your name. Do good with your estate, and be serviceable in church and commonwealth. I know some rich men grudge and envy any that are likely to enter into their labours; but as their glory will not descend after them, so usually those estates do no good when they are gone; "For who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool, that shall have rule over his labour."†

(4.) Take more time and pains for the good of your own souls, and lay out yourselves for the good of others; if you be unmarried study that text, 1 Cor. vii. 33—35, "He that is unmarried careth for the things

* In alienam familiam transitus. † Psal. xlix. 17. Eccl. ii. 19.

that belong to the Lord," how he may please the Lord Not that married persons have an exemption from soul concerns; but the unmarried have more leisure and a fairer opportunity for immediate acts of devotion. Married persons have some avocations in themselves lawful, from which the unmarried are free. The married may have numerous children, and so have many distractions, which childless persons are not entangled with, and so may be more at leisure for God, or as the words signify, "attend on the Lord without distraction;"* like the faithful servants who depart not from their master's side. O happy individuals who have a heart and leisure to keep so close to God! you have more time than others, see that your feet and hands, and heart coincide; your opportunities are double to those of others, let your improvement be doubled; you have no children to lay up for, lay out the more for God; he expects more from you than from others. You have no children to maintain, "honour the Lord with your substance;"† buy bibles, and catechisms for poor children, maintain them at school, relieve the poor, encourage a gospel ministry, give the tenth part at least of your yearly incomes to charitable uses; let your own hands be your executors; trust not others when you are dead; for as there are no thanks due to you for bequeathing legacies when you are forced to leave all, so you know not how they will be squandered or disbursed; besides, you lose the opportunity of shewing your charitable disposition. Living springs send forth streams liberally; dead pits afford nothing but what is drawn out with buckets. Watch and seize objects and occasions of doing good. Be sparing in laying out upon yourselves, but be liberal in good uses,

* Εὐπρόσεδρον τῷ Κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως. Indivisâ cum Domino conjunctione vivatur. † Prov. iii. 9.

let your superfluities give way to your brother's conveniencies, your conveniences to his necessities; yea, your necessities must go to supply his extremities; fear not wanting yourselves; you put all into a good bank; dare you not trust God with respect to bills of his acceptance and notes of promise? If you lend to the Lord, doubtless he will repay; do you fear the all-sufficient God will turn bankrupt? Consult the experience of God's servants, and see if the Jewish proverb have not proved true, Pay tythes that thou mayest be rich.* Remember what our Lord saith, Luke vi. 38, "Give, and it shall be given you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosoms."

4. The last consideration respects the obligation of all parents to endeavour to the utmost to bring their children and leave them under this covenant. Alas! what signifies your leaving them great estates, hundreds a year, or thousands of gold and silver, in comparison of this? David was a king, his many sons were noble princes, and Solomon one of the most glorious monarchs that ever the sun saw; so that it became a proverb, "Solomon in all his glory."† David also saw him in peaceable possession of the kingdom, "and the Lord magnified him exceedingly:" yet all this did not cheer up dying David's heart so much as this blessed covenant. That is but a carnal heart that can boast what treasures of worldly riches he leaves his children. The gracious soul would rather bequeath a promise to them, than all the wealth of the Indies.‡ Xenophon tells us, that one being asked, where is your

* Decima ut dives fias. † Matt. vi. 29. 2 Chron. i. 12.

‡ Laurence Saunder wrote to his wife: Riches I have none to endow you with, but that treasure of tasting, how sweet Christ is, which I feel, I bequeath to you.—*Fox Mon.*

treasure? He answered him, where Cyrus my friend is.* Much more may a Christian say, Christ is my friend, and my all. Oh that I could leave him to my dear child! that is the height of my ambition, to have my children gracious and glorified. As an honest minister said, if I should but see the fear of God in my children, I have enough, and myself, wife, sons, daughters, are all well provided for; I need no more.† Oh, that God would set parents' hearts towards the covenant of God! I shall furnish some motives and directions. In the first place as motives, I beseech you to consider,

1. That your children are "children of wrath as well as others."‡ Through you they became men, not holy men, for grace is adventitious. Adam begat a son "in his own likeness, after his own image,"‖ not God's, which he had lost. For grace comes by spiritual regeneration, not by natural generation. You gave them a sinful and miserable being! O be concerned that they may have a holy and happy being. They are born in sin; "travail over them till Christ be formed in them."§ If you cannot make them good, yet lament that they are so bad: labour to do them the kindness of being instrumental in planting grace in them.

2. Your children are more inclined to vice than virtue; they are born "like the wild ass's colt,"¶ with a bias the wrong way, and an antipathy in their nature to what is good: for "the carnal mind is enmity against God."** Ælian tells of a courtezan, that boasted she could easily get scholars away from Socrates, but Socrates could get no scholars from her.

* Οπυ Κυρος φίλος.

† Satis habeo satisque mihi, uxori, filiis et filiabus perspexi.

‡ Eph. ii. 3. ‖ Gen. v. 3. § Gal. iv. 19. ¶ Job xi. 12.

** Rom. viii. 7.

Wrong is always before right; naturally the left hand before the right. Children need not be taught what is bad, they learn that fast enough; but you will find much ado to drill them into what is good.

3. Yet they must learn divine truths, and their duty, or never be happy. "One thing is needful;"* if they die as they are born, with their backs on God, they are undone for ever; they are become like the brutes that perish. But it is better to be a brute, than to be a rational man like a brute. The one goeth upwards to be judged by God, and condemned to eternal torments; but the sensitive spirit of a beast goeth downwards to the earth.† And though some may think the beast shall not lose its existence, yet it is not capable of moral evil, and therefore not the subject of punishment in hell, as a rational, but graceless soul is. Would you have them to escape a condition far worse than that of the animal race? Oh, take pains that they may have grace, else there can be no salvation! Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

They are capable of instruction. For this end was the book of Proverbs written, "To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."‡ Aristotle indeed saith, that a young man is not a fit hearer of moral philosophy, or of ethics; but he speaks of what is usually, not what ought to be.‖ Children can learn games and trades, why not scriptures and catechisms? It is not enough to describe the capacity of many children; were they idiots or natural fools, destitute of common reason, it were a lamentable judgment of God, and a sore affliction to parents; but they have members of body, and use of reason. Oh, do what you can to obtain grace!

* Luke x. 42. † Eccl. iii. 21. ‡ Prov. i. 4.
‖ De facto, non de eo quod fieri debet.

treasure? He answered him, where Cyrus my friend is.* Much more may a Christian say, Christ is my friend, and my all. Oh that I could leave him to my dear child! that is the height of my ambition, to have my children gracious and glorified. As an honest minister said, if I should but see the fear of God in my children, I have enough, and myself, wife, sons, daughters, are all well provided for; I need no more.† Oh, that God would set parents' hearts towards the covenant of God! I shall furnish some motives and directions. In the first place as motives, I beseech you to consider,

1. That your children are "children of wrath as well as others."‡ Through you they became men, not holy men, for grace is adventitious. Adam begat a son "in his own likeness, after his own image,"‖ not God's, which he had lost. For grace comes by spiritual regeneration, not by natural generation. You gave them a sinful and miserable being! O be concerned that they may have a holy and happy being. They are born in sin; "travail over them till Christ be formed in them."§ If you cannot make them good, yet lament that they are so bad: labour to do them the kindness of being instrumental in planting grace in them.

2. Your children are more inclined to vice than virtue; they are born "like the wild ass's colt,"¶ with a bias the wrong way, and an antipathy in their nature to what is good: for "the carnal mind is enmity against God."** Ælian tells of a courtezan, that boasted she could easily get scholars away from Socrates, but Socrates could get no scholars from her.

* Οπυ Κυρος φίλος.

† Satis habeo satisque mihi, uxori, filiis et filiabus perspexi.

‡ Eph. ii. 3. ‖ Gen. v. 3. § Gal. iv. 19. ¶ Job xi. 12.

** Rom. viii. 7.

Wrong is always before right; naturally the left hand before the right. Children need not be taught what is bad, they learn that fast enough; but you will find much ado to drill them into what is good.

3. Yet they must learn divine truths, and their duty, or never be happy. "One thing is needful;"* if they die as they are born, with their backs on God, they are undone for ever; they are become like the brutes that perish. But it is better to be a brute, than to be a rational man like a brute. The one goeth upwards to be judged by God, and condemned to eternal torments; but the sensitive spirit of a beast goeth downwards to the earth.† And though some may think the beast shall not lose its existence, yet it is not capable of moral evil, and therefore not the subject of punishment in hell, as a rational, but graceless soul is. Would you have them to escape a condition far worse than that of the animal race? Oh, take pains that they may have grace, else there can be no salvation! Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

They are capable of instruction. For this end was the book of Proverbs written, "To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."‡ Aristotle indeed saith, that a young man is not a fit hearer of moral philosophy, or of ethics; but he speaks of what is usually, not what ought to be.‖ Children can learn games and trades, why not scriptures and catechisms? It is not enough to describe the capacity of many children; were they idiots or natural fools, destitute of common reason, it were a lamentable judgment of God, and a sore affliction to parents; but they have members of body, and use of reason. Oh, do what you can to obtain grace!

* Luke x. 42. † Eccl. iii. 21. ‡ Prov. i. 4.

‖ De facto, non de eo quod fieri debet.

You are taken with their outward features, wits, or parts; these qualify them not for heaven, till God's image be superinduced.

5. Parents have great advantage in beginning with their children whilst young: now their minds are tender, soonest impressed, like young twigs speedily bended, or a young horse easily broken, or a young hawk soonest brought to the lure. Take them betimes, before they be hardened in sin, and you may most likely prevail; but if they be let alone awhile, they will be past dealing with. Custom in sin makes them like the "Æthiopian with his skin, or the leopard with his spots."* Besides, teach them betimes, and they will more likely retain it. It is a usual saying, children's memories are soft, and readily take impression, and being clear or free from disturbance, retain it longest.† Season a new vessel, and it will keep the savour long.‡ Let cloth be dyed in wool, and afterwards in cloth, the colour will be most lively and durable. The application is easy.

6. Parents are entrusted with their children's souls as well as bodies. "All souls are mine,"‖ saith God, and he commits them to the tuition of parents as a precious talent, or depositum, saying as Pharaoh's daughter to Moses' mother, "take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."§ So when the child is born and baptized, God saith to parents, I devolve the charge of this child on you, look to it, if it miscarry through your fault, its blood will I require at your hand;¶ you must give an account for its soul; go then to God and say as Manoah concerning his son Samson, "How shall we order the child?

* Jer. xiii. 23. † Liquidæ sunt puerorum memoriæ.
‡ Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem testa diu.
‖ Ezek. xviii. 4. § Exod. ii. 9. ¶ Ezek. iii. 18.

And how shall we do unto him?"* Fetch your instructions from God, and assistance also for your children's good, think of a reckoning day.

7. By this you will manifest your own sincerity or deficiency, your love to God and your children, or your hatred; remember, no man is really good, who is not relatively good; "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren,"† saith our Lord, that is, evidence the sincerity of thy conversion, by endeavouring after the good of others. Grace is like fire that turns what it toucheth into its own nature; if you do not your endeavour to bring others, especially your offspring, into covenant, it is a shrewd sign that you are not yourselves in covenant with God; then woe be to you, O wretched parents of wretched children! Are you so indifferent whether Christ's kingdom be reared and erected in your family, that you will scarce put up a prayer, or speak a word to promote it? Where is your love to Christ that loved souls so dearly? And where is your true love to your natural offspring? If a beast be fallen into a pit, will you not help him out? Hast thou more care of an animal than the soul of thy child?

8. Satan lies at the catch for your children, that fiend of hell hunteth daily for the precious soul of thy dear child; he got possession when he came into the world, and he makes it his business to keep possession, and will do till Christ, who is "stronger than he,"‡ cast him out; and wilt thou, man, see a dog, a bear, the lion of hell hurry away thy child, and not cry out to heaven for aid? O hard-hearted being! doth not nature teach the hen to fly at the glede that would take her chickens, even the sheep to turn upon the dog that would seize her lamb? And art thou so far degenerated as to cast off all pity for thine own bowels?

* Judges xiii. 12. † Luke xxii. 32. ‡ Luke xi. 22.

O monster of mankind! hast thou laid aside humanity, as well as christianity?

9. The church and commonwealth require this office of love from you in relation to your children; and if you neglect their education you take a course to corrupt both. It is worth observing, that the heathen Romans in their courts of judicature, brought actions against such persons as were not careful in educating their children; Cicero laid this to the charge of Verres, that he had debauched his son, by intemperance, riot, and lewdness; it seems it was actionable among heathens, and it were well if it were punished among pretended Christians. Woe be to that town where the springs are poisoned; sad is the case of that church and state where academies and inns of court are corrupted, yea, corrupters, where strange children are born and brought up;* no reformation can be expected till public schools be reformed. It is said of Protagoras that he lived sixty years, and forty years in corrupting youth; if not only old trees in an orchard be rotten but young also, what fruit can be expected? it is fit they should be digged up, by this we may divine what would become of a church or kingdom without education. Consider,

10. The painful consequence of parents' neglecting the education of their children. "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame," Prov. xxix. 15; throw the reins on a child's neck, and whither will he not run? "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," and the "calamity of his father;" neither father nor mother has joy in a wicked child, and usually they may thank themselves for it.† The Switzers had a law, that if a child was condemned to die, the parent should execute him, because though a pious man may

* Isa. i. 4. Hos. v. 7. † Prov. x. 1. xix. 15. xvii. 21.

have a bad son, yet it is neglect in parents which is usually the ruin of their children. O what shame will cover the face, and horror fill the conscience of a bad father, or a good father conscious of guilt, when he shall see his child running the downward road to everlasting woe! I advise you therefore to a timely care to prevent these dreadful consequences.

But what course should parents take that sin may be restrained in their children, and that they may be principled with grace, and brought within the covenant of God?

I answer this is an extensive and ordinary topic on which I cannot now insist. Practical divines lay four great duties before parents, for the bringing up of their children: *provision*, *correction*, *instruction*, and *prayer*.

1. Providing food, raiment, and a calling. This, though a great duty, I pass as belonging not to our case; only I find this remarkable passage, that the Athenians ordered in their laws, that if parents had not brought up their children in a lawful calling, the children should not be bound to keep their parents. Thus all were set to trades.

2. Correction. Here I shall not enlarge, only observe, that it should be done seasonably, Prov. xix. 18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope," some put it off till children become too stubborn; do it with self-reflection, humiliation, moderation, and prayer, instructing them respecting their fault, and the way to mend it. I pass this.

3. Instruction. If I had more leisure, I might treat, at length, both on the *matter*, and the *manner* of performing the duty, something however may be said,

(1.) As to the matter. Instruct your children in the main fundamental principles of our christian religion, namely, that there is a God, concerning his na-

ture and perfections; the persons of the God-head; the creation of the world, and of man; the immortality of the soul, the nature of sin, the fall of Adam, and the sad fruits thereof; the remedy by Christ, his humiliation, offices, exaltation; the duty of man; the nature of a church; the privileges and character of believers; the ordinances; the state of all men after death; rewards and punishments, &c.

You are likewise to instruct them relative to the covenant of grace; the nature, use and ends of it; the difference between this and the old covenant of works; the mediator of it; the terms, privileges and conditions thereof; the seals of it, baptism and the Lord's supper; the importance and necessity of souls being within it; press them with arguments to enter into it, give directions about it.

(2.) With respect to the manner of instructing your children. You must do it—early, as soon as they are capable, when only drawn from the breasts, that they may suck in knowledge with their mother's milk, as Timothy.*—Frequently, once is not enough, but you must inculcate truths on them, whet them, as you go oft with the knife to the whet-stone, so the word signifies.†—Experimentally, not by rote or hearsay, work things on your hearts, learn and speak the truth as it is in Jesus;‡ speak feelingly, from the heart, as one that believes himself.—Wisely; observe the tempers of your children, some must be drawn, others driven, provoke not the tender-hearted to fretting or discontent.‖—Seasonably; observe proper yielding seasons, as a good humour, affliction or conviction, speak to them words upon the wheel, or at some favourable time when they will be best taken.§—Kindly, winningly,

* Isa. xxviii. 9. 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Deut. vi. 7. ‡ Eph. iv. 21.
‖ Jude 22, 23. Col. iii. 21. § Eccl. viii. 5. Prov. xxv. 11.

meekly, not in a passion, but draw with cords of love, oil them with affection, and they will go gently; even bitter pills coated with sugar will be well taken.* —Plainly and familiarly, not in high-flown language, but using similitudes, speak as they are able to hear, come on gradually, by drops, here a little and there a little.†—Faithfully; search the wound, do not skin it over, a tender hand makes a foul wound, a weak dose rather stirs, than purgeth out bad humours, rebuke sharply.‡—Scripturally; bring your authority along with you, shew them chapter and verse, God's authority joined with yours may prevail much, these are spiritual weapons.‖—Devoutly; pray solemnly§ by ejaculation before instruction; it is not your work but God's to make it successful; be sensible that all is lost if God commence not by striking with the great hammer, the hammer of his quick and powerful word.

4. The last duty of parents in reference to their surviving children is prayer. This is a natural duty, and a general relief to the aching hearts of pious parents, not only for obtaining children, as in the case of Hannah, but for grace in children, when they go astray; hence it was that holy Abraham, with whom this covenant was first made, breathes out his longing soul in a short ejaculation for his wild son, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Gen. xvii. 18, as if he had said, I thank God for Isaac, but I am not satisfied with Isaac only, I must beg spiritual and eternal life for my extravagant son Ishmael, though he be not the son of the promise, yet let him be a son of promise; if Isaac must have the earthly Canaan, let not Ishmael be excluded out of the heavenly. Thus must you plead with the Lord for children.

* Hos. xi. 3, 4. † Isa. xxviii. 10, 11. ‡ Luke xix. 22. Tit. i. 13.
‖ Acts xviii. 24, 28. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. § Rom. x. 1.

To assist you herein, I shall subjoin some pleas, arguments, and encouragements, not to move God, but to quicken your faith, hope, and importunity. Thus then say:—

(1.) Lord, this covenant which thou hast made with believers and their seed, did spring only from the fountain of thy free grace; this promise commenced before I had a being, and therefore could not depend on any worthiness in me. The Lord did not set his love on Israel because they were better than others, but because he loved them,* the love of benevolence produced the love of complacency, it is an everlasting love both in its origin and duration;† it hath no cause but in God's breast, and shall have no end. Lord, for thy word's sake, yea, "for thy servant's sake," namely, Christ, who is God's essential word, and according to thy own heart, hast thou done all these great things;‡ hadst thou seen any obstruction on my part, thou wouldest have forborne making this covenant. But such a covenant there is, and as grace made it, so let grace perform it.

(2.) Lord, thou art true and faithful in the performance of thy promises. Mercy made this covenant with Abraham, truth performs it to Jacob; thou art not as man that thou shouldst lie, thou hast sworn by thy holiness that thou wilt not lie unto David.|| Well, Lord, in hopes of the performance of thy covenant, I gave up my children to thee in baptism, wherein thou tookest them as thine own, and dost thou now repent of thy choice? O no, thou hast told me in thy word, that thy covenant promises are as sure as the waters of Noah not again overflowing the world; yea, the moun-

* Deut. vii. 7, 8. † Jer. xxxi. 3.
‡ 2 Sam. vii. 21, compared with 1 Chron. xvii. 19.
|| Mic. vii. 20. Numb. xxiii. 19. Psal. lxxxix. 35.

tains and hills will sooner depart, than God go back from his word. His covenant is as sure as the ordinances of heaven, sun, moon, and stars; as sure as day and night.* Lord, my soul having got such good hold of thee by faith, I will not let go this hold, but adhere to thee till thou make good thy promise to me and my offspring; I am resolved to plead thy bond, by faith and prayer, till thou pay this debt.

(3.) Lord, thou hast made this covenant good to others; thou hast performed the mercy promised to our fathers, and remembered thy holy covenant; there hath been a performance of the things spoken by the Lord;† never could any stand forth, and charge thee for breach of promise, from the beginning of the world to this day; and I humbly hope thou wilt not begin with me. Thou madest a promise to Abraham of a numerous offspring and the possession of Canaan;‡ and thou didst perform all to a tittle, yea, to a minute, the least iota did not fail or fall to the ground; and thou art as great, as good, as powerful, as merciful now as ever. Thou sayest, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" My soul echoes, no: I know that thou canst do every thing.|| With God all things are possible, "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief;" thou art able to bring back my prodigal child, to convert my stubborn child; oh give a proof of thy power in this great concern.

(4.) Lord, thou hast made good the promise to my own soul; my parents improved and pleaded thy covenant for me, a sinful creature, and wilt thou not make the same good to mine? I must say as once Solomon did, "Thou hast kept with thy servant David my father, that which thou promisedst him; thou

* Isa. liv. 9, 10. Jer. xxxi. 35—37. † Luke i. 45, 55, 72.
‡ Gen. xiii. 16. xvii. 6—8. || Gen. xviii. 14. Job xlii. 2.

spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day."* Blessed be the God of my fathers, that hath not cut off his kindness from me, who am the seed of those faithful ones that are now at rest with thee. I myself can rise up and bear witness to thy faithfulness. Behold a testimony of divine love; thou hast "shewed me a token for good," who am "the son of thy handmaid;"† and I take this as a pledge of more kindness to mine; thou hast loosed my bonds,‡ wilt thou not also knock off the fetters of sin from my poor child? I was as wicked as any, and cost my father and mother many a groan, but thou heardest their prayer, wilt thou not also hear me?

(5.) Lord, I do find all that I want for myself and children within the compass of the covenant; for as thou hast promised to be my God, and to pardon sin, so thou hast undertaken to work the conditions thou requirest, as absolutely necessary for obtaining the privileges of the covenant. Thou sayest "They shall all know me from the least to the greatest of them;"‖ that is, as I understand it, young as well as old. Thou sayest, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God."§ Again thou sayest, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return;"¶ amongst whom are children; and that "He will turn the hearts of the fathers with the children."** This is enough Lord; may my children be savingly converted, I have all my desire, for this shall be their salvation; and I have these promises under thy hand, and surely they are not insignificant.

(6.) Besides, Lord, thou hast converted some whose

* 1 Kings viii. 23, 24. † Psal. lxxxvi. 16, 17. ‡ Psal. cxvi. 16.
‖ Jer. xxxi. 34. § Deut. xxx. 6. ¶ Hos. xiv. 7.
** Mal. iv. 6. So some read it.

immediate parents were not in covenant, and whether their remote parents were so, who can tell? I plainly discern thou sometimes steppest out of the ordinary course, reaching over the heads of some more nearly related, to lay hold on strangers' hearts, and I do not grudge them this mercy, but adore the freeness of divine grace; only my soul fetcheth some encouragement thence, will my Lord "graft into the true olive" some "wild branches," and not take in those which are natural? Wilt thou say, *ammi* my people, to them that were not thy people,* and wilt thou say *lo ammi*,† to such as cling to thee, and are resolved not to let thee go? O my Lord, the exuberancy of free grace to strangers is an encouragement to me; and thus I say, will my father give such large portions of bread to dogs, and can he not afford a crumb to a child? I see some, whose parents never spake a word to God for them, eminent in religion, and monuments of free grace, and shall any of my children, which thou hast taken into thy family, be shut out of thy doors? I hope not.

(7.) Lord, if thou hadst a design to deny my suit thou wouldst have shut my mouth in prayer; for thy word saith, "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."‡ An enlarged heart in prayer is not only a means, but a pledge of gracious audience; surely thou wilt not send thy Spirit into my heart, and draw out my heart to thee in vain; when a father bids his child ask, he designs to give: thou wilt not let this blessed Spirit breathe in vain in my soul. Wilt thou enlarge my heart, and not grant my request? Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee."‖ In thee, O Lord, do

* Rom. xi. 17, 23. Hos. ii. 23.
† Not my people.
‡ Psal. x. 17.
‖ Psal. xxxviii. 9, 15.

I hope; thou wilt hear me, O Lord, my God." Thou hast raised my heart in expectation, wilt thou not give me the mercy I expect?

(8.) Lord, is not thy glory concerned in this affair as well as my comfort? and even my comfort is something in thine eye; for thou sayest, "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."* And alas! what joy can there be in a family, when a foolish son is heaviness both to father and mother, and a disturbance to the whole house?† But oh! thy name is dishonoured by my own flesh; wicked men hardened; some scandalized by the miscarrying of the children of the covenant. And on the other hand, if covenant grace be spread upon my child's heart, by converting grace, many will "glorify God."‡ His own soul will be the lively trumpet of divine glory, by confessing sin, and turning to God; thy omniscience, grace, and omnipotence, will be made glorious. And who can tell how many may be won to God by his example? and every convert "glorifies God in the day of visitation," and at the great day God will be "glorified in his saints."‖ Lord, consult thy glory!

(9.) Lord, thou hast given me some encouragement concerning this child I am praying for. When my child was young he was very hopeful; now he is grown up, my hopes are obscured; he hath now embraced the world, he hath fallen into bad company and courses; the less are my hopes now, because he is a criminal apostate, and sins against more light than others, this daunts and damps my spirit. However, I will pray and wait still, for what is discouraging to me, is rather an opportunity for thee. "In the mount of

* Psal. cxviii. 15. † Prov. x. 1. ‡ Gal. i. 24
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 12. 2 Thess. i. 10.

the Lord it shall be seen,"* when the knife is at Isaac's throat; "the valley of Achor is a door of hope."† When men say, "our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts, then the graves are opened,"‡ and there is life from the dead. The case is mine; I am saying as Jonah, "I am cast out of his sight; yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." The other look may fetch the mercy; there is a *may be* in the case. Can a child of so many prayers and fears miscarry?

This brings to mind a passage in Melchior Adamus, De vitis Theol. Germ. pag. 724; it is this, the mother of Hunnius, being with child of him, had a vision, she thought she was in the church, and took up a reed, or a straw, or such a small thing; while she held it in her fingers, it so increased, that she was almost oppressed with its weight, even to death; she again presently saw it turned into a pillar of the temple, then she was eased of her burden. This was verified in her son Hunnius, who though religiously educated, and hopeful in childhood, yet fell into bad company, and then into horrible temptations, and a sad apprehension that he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, but by grace was recovered, and proves an excellent instrument in the church of God. This may be of use to poor afflicted, desponding parents.

(10.) Lord, if thou deny my suit, and glorify thy justice, in the rejection and condemnation of my child; I must and will acquiesce in thy sovereign, righteous will. It is hard to bring my heart to do it, but I will say, Thy will be done. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out?"‖ I myself deserve to be forsaken and cast

* Gen. xxii. 14. † Hos. ii. 15. ‡ Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12. ‖ Rom. xi. 33.

into hell. I have many a time told thee, I must for ever justify thee, if thy justice be glorified in my destruction for all my abominations; and if thou deal thus with my beloved offspring, I will say, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto me and mine confusion of face.* I submit my all to thee, and thank thee for grace in my own soul, and hopes of glory; and if my wilful child may not bring a revenue of glory to free grace, I will be submissive.

But say you, what tender-hearted parent can be contented to see his child lost?

[i.] You must distinguish betwixt nature and grace. Nature loves its own, and cannot bear to see part of itself in misery. Yea, grace cannot but desire, cannot but earnestly breathe after the spiritual and eternal good of our children. And it is not only lawful, but our duty to desire it; yet if God deny it, grace brings man's will to a due submission to the divine disposal; for the more a Christian is like to God, the more is his will melted into God's will; and therefore will a child of God say, *Amen*, on the execution of God's justice upon relatives at the great day. As sanctified Levi in the cause of God, said to his father and his mother, "I have not seen; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children."† Nature will be in a sort swallowed up by grace in God's good pleasure. A religious gentlewoman had a vicious son, who fell into many debaucheries, and into one heinous act, which sunk her tender spirit; but recovering herself, she said to him with some warmth, Ah, my depraved son, thou hast cost me many a tear and groan, and bitter hour, but a day is coming when I shall triumph in seeing the just vengeance of God executed upon thee;

* Psal. cxlv. 17. Dan. ix. 7. † Deut. xxxiii. 9.

this did so appal the young gentleman, that he laid it to heart, repented, and became a new man, to the joy of his pious mother. But,

[ii.] You must consider a state of final condemnation, in a double light.—As a state of unchecked sinning, blaspheming and hating of God to the utmost. God calls you not to be content with this, which is so directly contrary to the grace of God in the Christian; nor yet may you be content to have your child separated from God, the chief good; which is the worst part of hell. But,—Hell may be considered as a place or state of torment and misery, to the rational creature; and on this account, though you cannot have satisfaction in having your child tormented, which is abhorrent to nature, but your souls must be so overruled with the divine pleasure, as that, where his will is manifested, you must rest satisfied with that by which God thinks proper to glorify himself.

(11.) Yet further, say, Lord, if thou refuse to hear me for this or that particular child, yet I will thank thee for free grace displayed towards another child, or more of my children that are hopeful. God forbid, that my sorrow for our child should drown all my comfort in another, or my complaints should silence my gratitude; I will praise thee for what I enjoy, and hope for more. Nature teacheth persons to beg a future, by acknowledging a former kindness. I bless the Lord, I have a praying, obedient child, that was born as destitute of grace as this, and I humbly take this as a pledge of more; thou hast grace enough for all my children, I will not despond, but be thankful; such a child I hope, hath embraced the covenant of God. "Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house? that thou hast brought me hitherto; and this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God! but

thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"* thou didst not owe me any thing, and yet thou hast given me the best things. It is true I have a Cain, yet I have a righteous Abel, I have a Shem as well as a Ham, an Isaac as well as an Ishmael, a Jacob as well as an Esau, a Solomon as well as an Amnon or Absalom. All my children were born in sin, and God might have suffered all to have died in sin; but blessed be free grace, that hath plucked this or that as a brand out of the fire; God hath heard prayer and taken of my seed to be the Lord's, he hath not dealt so with all families. I own this as a higher preferment for my children than if they were the greatest princes on earth, I will be thankful for them, yet jealous of them, and mix my praises with prayers, the heart is very deceitful; I will give God glory, yet not glory in my children. But my jealousy shall not obscure the glory of this mercy; Ebenezer, hitherto God hath helped; I will rejoice with trembling; something God hath done that I may love and praise him, and be encouraged to hope for more; much is yet to do that I may still have an errand to the throne of grace, thus my Lord keeps me in a waiting, depending posture, I must have something to evidence that God is my God, and a hearer of prayer; I must not have all, that I may know I am on earth, and not in heaven. It may be religion may live in my family when I am dead and gone; and if all my offspring be not happy, I hope some may; however, God hath done my own soul good, and laid a foundation of grace in my heart, and will lay the top-stone in glory. It was a notable speech of a gracious minister of Christ, Mr. Avery;† passing to New England, in a storm at sea, expecting every wave

* 2 Sam. vii. 18—20. † See the life of Mr. Mather, pag. 131.

to bring death, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Lord, I cannot claim preservation of my life, but according to thy covenant I claim heaven; immediately a wave wafted him to heaven—he, his wife, and five children, being then drowned. And is this nothing that thou mayest with gratitude and confidence claim a promise for thy own salvation, if it reach no farther?

(12.) Lastly, Lord, notwithstanding all the discouragement I have, I will believe, hope, and pray till thou take me off by my own death, or till the death of my child. As I will follow on to know, and love, and serve the Lord, whatever thou do with me, so I am resolved to pray, and hope, and wait whatever thou say to me, for I am sure, it is good for a man both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* God is worthy to be waited on, even upon my knees, I cannot be in a better exercise. I confess, my dear Lord, I am a poor worm, have a wicked heart, am of polluted lips, and a sinful life; I deserve not the least crumb of bread, or drop of water, I have forfeited my right to all covenant as well as common mercies, for myself and offspring; I have a child bearing my own image, not thine; a child of wrath by nature as well as others, but thou in thy love hast made a covenant with believers and their seed, thou hast brought me into the bond of the covenant; the like mercy I beg for mine, my child must have thy image as well as mine, or it is undone for ever, and it is not in my power to convey it, but thou canst. My daily errand to the throne of grace, is to beg the blessings of the covenant of grace, for me and mine, I will not go from thy door without alms; thou shalt have a troublesome guest of me till thou grant me my request; O remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast

* Lam. iii. 26.

caused me to hope.* Come, Lord, let covenant grace enter into the soul of my child, which is part of myself, and I will take it as done to myself; if I had not the mercy I beg under a promise, I durst not ask it, but thou hast made thyself a debtor, and I will plead thy bond by faith in prayer; thou canst not deny thy own hand-writing; thou art faithful, and wilt perform it to some, and why not to me?

God loves such importunate beggars, and our dear Lord Jesus hath proposed two parables,† to encourage importunity; therefore it is not unmannerly intrusion, but only earnestness and approved perseverance, wherein God most delights; the end thereof is not to move God to alter his purpose, but that our own souls may have the condition of the promise; thus the Canaanitish, or Syrophenician‡ woman cries out for her daughter, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil," Matt. xv. 22—28; she received a first, a second, and a third repulse, but she perseveres still, and will have no denial, and at last obtained her suit, with a high encomium and large grant, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it even unto thee as thou wilt." Go thou and do likewise. You cannot be too importunate, only do not limit the Holy One of Israel; as long as there is life, there is hope, therefore continue your prayers as long as the children, for whose spiritual and eternal interests you have so much solicitude, continue in the land of the living, and as long as the breath of life animates your own frame.

* Psal. cxix. 49. † Luke xi. 5, 8, 9. xviii. 1—8. ‡ Mark vii. 6.

HEAVENLY CONVERSE;

OR,

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE COMMUNION

BETWEEN

THE SAINTS ON EARTH,

AND

THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN,

MADE PERFECT IN HEAVEN.

THE

PREFACE.

DIVINE providence having of late removed from the stage of this world, many worthy ministers, pious relations, and choice christian friends, I bethought myself how their removal might be improved, though their bodies are laid in the silent dust; and in that respect, are in the circumstances of a "dead man out of mind, in the land of forgetfulness." * Whether active or passive, themselves not remembering any thing, nor others remembering them; yet notwithstanding, they are alive to God, and with God, "and the memory of the just is blessed," † and must not be altogether forgotten by survivors. If it become us not "to be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises," ‡ then must we also remember them for that purpose; and if God write a book of remembrance concerning them, surely we should; ‖ and not only of their conduct, whilst in the flesh with us, but of their present circumstances and employment in their blessed state above, so far as our limited capacities can conceive of them from scripture revelation; and we should conform ourselves to them according to the platform of prayer taught us by our Saviour, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. §

This conformity to the saints above, and communion with them, is a duty seldom studied, and as rarely practised. Divines tell us of a sevenfold communion that saints have. ¶—They have communion with God the Father, 1 John i. 3.—With Christ the Son, 1 Cor. i. 9.—With the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. With the holy angels, Heb. i. 14.—With all the true members of Christ's mystical body on earth, Eph. iv. 12, 13.—With the

* Psal. xxxi. 12. lxxxviii. 12. † Prov. x. 7. ‡ Heb. vi. 12.
‖ Mal. iii. 16. § Matt. vi. 10. ¶ Dr. Pearson on the Creed, p. 714.

members of the same society, 1 Cor. x. 16.—And with the saints departed. The last is that which is handled in the ensuing Treatise.

That this communion of saints is a fundamental article of a Christian's faith cannot be denied; though by many misinterpreted and practically decried, yet many that stand up for it, will not stand up to practise it without reserve; most men confining their communion to their own party, excluding all from their fellowship, that differ from them, though in things not essential. Most understand not how Christians at a distance, can have any communion in spirit, though Paul saith to the church at Colosse, "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit."* Many are dark, most of a private, few of a catholic spirit, so as to think and act according to the latitude of this principle.

I think it is beyond all question, that the church of God is rightly distributed into militant here on earth, and that called triumphant in heaven; there is an upper and lower part of the New Jerusalem. That "above is free, which is the mother of us all."† The cabalists observe that the word Jerusalem, is of the dual number, to denote doth a heavenly and earthly city; and they say, the taking away of the letter jod out of Jerusalem, 2 Sam. v. 13, מ רושלם doth intimate the taking away of the earthly and establishing the heavenly. But that above, and this below, differ not in kind, but degree; both are children of one father, have union to one head, are members of the same body, are animated by one and the same spirit, and employed in the same service, for the same common end, the advancement of God's glory. These in the lower room, have the "earnest of of the Spirit," which is a pledge of that felicity which those above enjoy; they are endeared to them in affection, reverence their memory, imitate their holiness, hope and long to be with them; but dare not adore them, nor beg their suffrages for them in their prayers, or their merits to pass for them, which were contrary to scripture; and irrational, because they know not our hearts; injurious to Christ our mediator, and absolute idolatry, as Protestant divines have demonstrated sufficiently against the Papists.

Another opinion of some of the ancients has degraded the

* Col. ii. 5. † Gal. iv. 26.

saints departed; some thinking that their souls are shut up in some subterraneous places till the day of judgment, and that only martyrs enter paradise, which, they say, is a place beneath the heavens; but we believe according to Paul's description of paradise, that it is in the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.—that the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom*—that the thief upon the cross went immediately into that paradise where Christ himself was†—and that the spirits of just men, are upon their dissolution made perfect in the immediate enjoyment of God. There was but a moment of interval betwixt Paul's being in the flesh, and his being with Christ in glory.‡

Well then, we do firmly believe, that our pious friends and relations, dying in the Lord, are wafted through the air, the devil's territories, into the empyrean heavens, where they "shall be ever with the Lord, and see God face to face; where God is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."‖ Yea, the "saints shall judge the world, and sit with Christ on his throne."§ O happy day! O triumphant joy! doth it not make our hearts leap within us, to consider that our parents, children, husbands, wives, dear christian friends, with whom we have walked, watched, fasted, and prayed, are now safely lodged in the mansions above? It is true, we miss their company, but should not love to them drown our sorrow for them? should not godly sympathy make us rejoice with them that rejoice? shall we not by faith see them standing on the shore, arrived in that blessed haven, where we hope in God's time to arrive, though now tossed on this tumultuous sea? They behold us, and wish us safe with them, as we pray for the resurrection of their bodies. We may be glad that the society above is increased, though ours be diminished here below; yet praying and hoping the "Lord will add unto his church daily such as shall be saved, and will be with it to the end of the world."¶

What a blessed prospect can faith display, when her piercing eye can peep through the curtains of mortality, and with stoned Stephen behold "God the Father, and Jesus in our flesh, at

* Luke xvi. 22. † Luke xxiii. 43. ‡ Phil. i. 23, 24.
‖ 1 Thess. iv. 17. 2 Thess. i. 10. § 1 Cor. vi. 2. Rev. iii. 21.
¶ Matt. xxviii. 20.

God's right hand, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" even those who but lately were accounted the scorn and off-scouring of the world; hated, nick-named, fined, imprisoned, banished, not judged worthy of room in the church, nor on earth, by the malignant world. O surprising change! to see these very saints entertained with applause, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,"* in token of triumph, and admitted into the presence-chamber, whilst their cruel adversaries are thrust down amongst devils, in regions of darkness for ever. O who would not be a child of God in rags, rather than sit with profane princes in their greatest glory!

Consent and harmony is the perfection of the universe, as being the music of the spheres. Divines tell us of a threefold unity.—Of persons in one nature; as the three persons of the trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.—Of two natures in one person; the divine and human in Christ.—Of many persons and natures of one quality and disposition; this is in the mystical body of Christ. This is in some measure begun here, and perfected in heaven, when all shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and there shall be no jarring in the music. O happy day, when they shall see eye to eye, and serve God with one consent! Who would not be glad to join in that concert and choir? Who would not long and say, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace."† In heaven there are no Babel builders, no confusion of languages; as they are intelligible one to another, so they all speak the language of Canaan, which some think will be the Hebrew tongue, if indeed they employ any articulate sound. There have been fine and ingenious projects of a universal character, for words or things, to make all the world understand one another, a curious invention! but if that fail, this will hold—in heaven the saints are sweetly concentred.

Would to God there were more of this blessed society! the more and welcomer, there is room for all, the mansions are large, the feast plenteous; there are rivers of pleasures, an

* Rev. vii. 9. † Psal. cxx. 5, 6.

ocean of delight; they must enter into their master's joy; as thousands of vessels cast into the sea, all are filled, but all cannot contain it.

Who would not be of this number? O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity, and slight this celestial glory! Dreadful is your case if you be found out of Christ, in a state of nature. You that have attended ordinances, conversed with believers, professed to be of their number, how astonishing will it be to see so many come from all parts of the world, and "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and you the professed children of the kingdom shut out?* Virgins foolish, because without oil, rapping at the door, and howling, rejected with *I know you not;* while the wise are admitted with honour. Look to it, every one is not accepted; what is your choice now, must be your case for ever. If now you walk in the way of genuine Christians, you shall have a reward with them. If you despise them as a company of frantic, or melancholy fools, because they have prayed, wept, and kept a needless stir in religion, you are like to be expelled out of their society for ever.

I shall say no more at present, but acquaint the world with the occasion of this short Tract. God had removed a very excellent minister, who left a solitary widow, and many sad hearts; this Sermon was studied and preached to comfort mourners; God made it useful for that end. A stranger of another county providentially heard it, and desired a copy of it; I transcribed it, and committed it to his disposal, to send it to the press or not, at his option.

Such as it is, I refer it to the reader's judgment, and myself to the prayers of Christians, for a sinful creature, yet a messenger of Christ,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

* Matt. viii. 1, 12.

HEAVENLY CONVERSE.

HEBREWS XII. 23.

——*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

THESE words are to be considered in two points of view:

1. *Absolutely*, or abstractedly, as in themselves: or,
2. *Relatively*, or in their connection.

A word or two may be advanced on the text in the former sense, from whence may arise these observations.

Obs. 1. That there are spirits distinct from the bodies of men.

I remark this the rather, because Sadduceeism prevails much amongst us; the Sadducees say, "There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit," Acts xxiii. 8. Practical atheists are numerous, and speculative dogmatizing atheists are too many, notwithstanding the many volumes written against them. The Sadducees judged the soul to be only a crasis or temperament of the body and its humours. The ancients say of them, that they affirmed God himself to be corporeal; but God is a spirit, and the souls of men are spirits; hence God is said to be "The Father of spirits,* who formed

* John iv. 24. Heb. xii. 9.

the spirit of man within him;"* the constitution of man's nature proves this, yea, the exercise of his reason supposes it; he that denies it contradicts his very being. There is, saith Elihu, "A spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."† It is true, it is hard to conceive what this soul is, and harder to define it; it is a heavenly spark, lighted by the breath of God, of the same nature with that of angels; spirit is the genus, angel is a species comprehended under it. The soul of man is a faint resemblance of God; the faculties of the soul resemble the Trinity in vital action, intellection, and volition; therefore it has been defined to be a vital, intellectual, volitive spirit, animating a human organized body. The powers of the soul are the instruments of reason. I need not however insist on this, but shall take it for granted amongst rational creatures.

Obs. 2. That spirits are substances, having an existence separate from bodies.

When men breathe out their last, the soul expires not; it hath an existence and agency without the body. The essence of the soul is eternal, it had a beginning, but shall have no end; it is a blossom of eternity; while it is in the body, it is called the soul; when it is separated from the body, it is not properly a soul, but a spirit. Hence, in the text, we read "the spirits of just men," and our Saviour saith, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones;" and Stephen dying, saith, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."‡

That the soul is a substance, not a mere accident, is thus proved:

(1.) That which is nothing, can do nothing.‖ But the soul doth move, understand, will; therefore it hath

* Zech. xii. 1. † Job xxxii. 8. ‡ Luke xxiv. 39. Acts vii. 59.
‖ Non existentis, non est actus.

an existence. A reality it hath, though purely spiritual, and invisible to sense, but no less real; for it is said Prov. xvi. 2, "The Lord weigheth the spirits;" therefore they have some weight.

(2.) The soul is the subject of properties; and that which is a subject capable of habits, or affections, is a substance. Now the soul is capable of love, desire, hope, delight, joy, sorrow, in a natural sense; of cultivating arts and sciences, in a civil sense; of exhibiting graces and vices, in a moral sense; therefore must needs be a substance.

(3.) The soul is a being of itself; not an accident, or quality inhering in another subject; hence David saith, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;"* and the apostle Peter requires us to "commit the keeping of our souls to God."† Here is the cage, the bird is flown; the soul is God's creature as well as the body, and will have its existence after the body is dissolved into dust and corruption; so our Lord saith, Matt. x. 28, "Men may kill the body, God the soul."

(4.) The soul is the man.‡ Man hath his denomination from the better part; Gen. xlvi. 26, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt," that is, all the persons; yea, the soul is so noble a part of man, that sometimes the body is excluded as inconsiderable; 2 Cor. v. 8, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Still he harps on this string, insisting on the soul, as if the body had no personality with the soul; therefore elsewhere he accounts the body as a perishing, a vile thing,‖ but reckons upon the soul, the "inward man, being renewed day by day."§ This is the man worth

* Psalm xxxi. 5.
† 1 Peter iv. 19.
‡ Animus cujusque est quisque.
‖ Phil. iii. 21.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

speaking of, and reckoning upon. Thus the soul is a substance.

I might add, that it was the soul that Christ came principally to redeem, and the body by consequence.

Obs. 3. That as soon as the soul leaves the body at death, it launcheth into an eternal state.

This is clear from the text. The soul of Judas went to its "own place;"* that is, into the state of the damned, whither his deserts cast him. Believers go straight to heaven, being carried by the safe convoy of guardian "angels, into Abraham's bosom."† Hence it it is said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,"‡ ἀπαρτι, from henceforth, that is, from the first instant their immortal soul is breathed out of this mortal body, they are with Christ: doubtless Paul understood his soul would be with Christ as soon as it was loosed from the body, which made him so earnestly to long for it, Phil. i. 23. Yea, Christ said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43.

(1.) Then surely the soul at death is not annihilated, that is, turned into nothing; it is a spirit, and consists not of parts, as the body doth, and therefore is not divisible, and so cannot be subject to dissolution, but continues in its being.

(2.) The soul sleeps not, for it ceaseth not in its acts and operations when the body is asleep, as is clear from dreams, wherein the soul is apprehensive and lively in its imaginations, as it is when the body is most waking and vigorous.

(3.) The soul is not buried with the body, to rise with it at the resurrection, as a gentleman in these parts hath lately asserted; because it is not mortal, nor subject to death, for Solomon saith, Eccles. xii. 7,

* Acts i. 25. † Luke xvi. 22. ‡ Revel. xiv. 13.

"The spirit shall return to God who gave it," to receive its final sentence of absolution or condemnation; and this is at death, "when the dust returns to the earth, as it was."

(4.) The soul goes not to purgatory, as Papists affirm, to be cleansed from venial sins: we deny it, as having no warrant from the word of God, which mentions only two places for men after this life, heaven and hell, joy and torment.* All the ancient fathers are against it: Augustin saith, "After this life, there remains no compunction or satisfaction. Christ's blood, applied in this life, is the only purgatory for sins," 1 John i. 7. Heb. i. 3.

Obs. 4. The spirits of just or pious persons, and only they, are made perfect after this life.

Perfection must be taken in a double sense: first, of parts; secondly, of degrees. In the former, every sincere Christian is perfect in this life, with a gospel perfection of sincerity in heart and life; but no man on earth will attain to the latter. Paul himself renounceth it, Phil. iii. 12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." As to the former, he asserts it of all sincere saints, verse 15, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded." We must hold this distinction, or make Paul contradict himself. But as soon as the breath of a child of God departs out of his body, he is completely perfect. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 10. O happy day! O blessed state! "When such as are feeble shall be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord before them: when every one shall arrive at a perfect age, at the

* Luke xvi. 25, 26. John iii. 3. Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!"* But this is not the subject of which I shall treat.

We must consider the text as relating to the context; and then we must go back to verse 22, wherein we have a most excellent description of the gospel dispensation, as contra-distinguished from the legal economy. We have the following particulars: *We are come;* that is, new testament believers, being united and associated, have come,

1. *To mount Sion,* the blessed place of worship where the temple stood, whither all the males went yearly to worship; it was holy by God's special consecration. So believers are come to whatsoever was typified thereby, gospel worship, and most excellent privileges, Eph. ii. 14—22.

2. *To the heavenly Jerusalem,* that is, to the church catholic, of a heavenly descent, and as heavenly an ascent; it comes from above, is part of that Jerusalem above; governed by heaven's laws in the gospel charter; of invincible strength, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" of wonderful beauty and harmony.†

3. *To an innumerable company of angels.* A thousand thousands minister unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. To these, saints below are gathered, in Christ; with these they have communion, as being all of one family.‡ Holy angels are God's officers for the saints' good, and guard them to heaven.

4. *To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.* Instead of all the males coming to worship, now we are come to all the members of the church, Jews and Gentiles, through-

* Zech. xii. 8. Eph. iv. 13. † Gal. iv. 26. Matt. xvi. 18. Col. ii. 19.
‡ Dan. vii. 10. Eph. i. 10. iv. 10, 15.

out the world; who are all real saints, elect souls, written in the Lamb's book of life, animated with one spirit.*

5. *To God the judge of all*, that is, the Lord paramount of his church, the object, author, and end of all gospel transactions. We have interest in a propitious God, are accepted in the beloved; he is the defender of his saints, punisher of their enemies, recompenser of upright services, comforter of their hearts, all in all.†

6. *To the spirits of just men made perfect*, that is, freed from sin, complete in grace, in full communion with God, having received their full reward in God's immediate presence, "having fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith," and who are now wearing the triumphant crown of righteousness which they will wear to all eternity.‡

7. *To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.* This, this is the Alpha and Omega, partaking of a human and divine nature. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the bright and morning star, the corner-stone of our salvation;‖ a prophet transcending Moses, a mediator of a better covenant, confirming all by his death.

8. *To the blood of sprinkling*, that precious blood which is of more value than heaven and earth; this sprinkling of blood was the highest performance in his mediatorial office on earth; and this he manages now when he is in heaven, having entered into the holy of holies, to apply the benefits of his undertaking, and to appear in the presence of God for us.§ But to return to the words of the text:

* Rev. xxi. 27. Rom. viii. 17. Eph. iv. 5—11.
† Eph. i. 6. Isa. liv. 17. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rom. viii. 32.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. ‖ Rev. i. 11. Heb. xii. 2.
§ Heb. ix. 14, 24. vii. 25. Isa. lii. 13—15.

To the spirits of just men made perfect, that is, ye are come—for the word προσεληλύθατε, ver. 22, must be understood here. Calvin interprets it, as signifying, that we Christians are gathered to those holy souls, which having put off their bodies, have left all the pollution of this world behind them;* whether it was the ancient patriarchs, or such as died successively till that time, and even to this very day. *Made perfect*; You will say,

Doth not the same apostle thus express himself? Heb. xi. 40, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Answ. 1. They borrowed their perfection from our gospel dispensation; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; the law had "but a shadow of good things to come, they were but carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation; Christ being the end of the law to every one that believeth."†

2. Believers under the legal dispensation, were justified and saved by Christ to come; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and believed in him, and it was counted to him for righteousness.‡ So David, and all the old testament saints; and when they had finished their course, they entered into a state of perfection, they saw God immediately, which the Hebrews call, a being put under the throne of glory;‖ and they judged that those spirits entered into that state of perfection, sooner or later, as they depart out of this life, more or less purified. To them, Christians are said to

* Ut significet nos aggregari ad sanctas animas, quæ corporibus exutæ, omnes mundi sordes reliquerunt.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Heb. vii. 19. x. 1. ix. 10. Rom. x. 4.

‡ John viii. 56. Rom. iv. 22. ‖ Poni sub solio gloriæ.

come, by faith, hope, love, and sweet intercourse, or communion.

Observe it, *ye are come*, not only you shall come at your death, but while you live in the flesh, you are with them in spirit, by a blessed connection in one body, under Christ, the head; and some kind of communion in spirit.

Doct. There is a way whereby saints glorified in heaven, and believers sanctified on earth, come to each other.

Or, there is a union and communion maintained between gracious souls on earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. This is a mysterious point, yet a truth. We believe such a thing as communion of saints here below, though living at a vast distance in place, and though they never saw one another, or could understand one another's language, yet there is a communion in spirit: so it is in this case, only saints above are at the upper end of the table, or rather in the upper room, we below; they are in God's immediate presence, we in a foreign country; they drink deep of those rivers of pleasures, we do but taste how good God is; they are at full age, saints below in their minority; yet both are children, dear to God; we live by faith, they by vision and sensible fruition; we have but the earnest, they have full possession of the celestial inheritance.

In the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall observe the following method:

I. Declare how the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven come to, or have communion with saints below?

II. How saints on earth come to the saints above?

III. In what way this takes place?

IV. Conclude all with some practical inferences?

I. How do the spirits made perfect above, come to the saints below?

Answ. 1. By consent and communion in ordinances. The worship above is a counterpart to that of the saints below; as we sing hosanna, they resound hallelujah; wherever gospel worship is offered on earth, they above concur therewith.

Whether the saints glorified be present in the assemblies of saints here below, as scripture asserts the holy angels are, I know not;* but some understand such as join with the angels, Rev. vii. 11, singing, "Blessing and glory, and wisdom, thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever," to be saints glorified; for it is said, ver. 14, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

O how do the glorified spirits echo to the saints' praises here! adoring free grace, the merits of Christ's blood, and the blessed conquests of the Holy Spirit. The worship is of the same nature, differently circumstanced; they being in the heavenly temple, in the royal presence, with harps well tuned; but we worship afar off, with jarring music, and on a lower key.

2. By some kind of sympathy with their suffering fellow members on earth; so far as their glorified state will bear, they have tender compassionate feelings, towards such as are still in the road, labouring, striving, fighting with temptations, persecutions, and corruptions, well remembering that themselves were lately in the same condition. These glorified saints, now arrived at the haven, stand upon the shore, and see their brethren in the ship on this tempestuous sea, tossed with storms, beset with pirates, endangered by rocks and sands, and

* 1 Cor. xi. 10. Eph. iii. 10.

their hearts long to see us also safely landed; and as far as they know any of our conditions more hazardous, so are they concerned for us; nor doth this sympathy abate their present joy, but rather increases it, to see themselves out of danger. Nor is it inconsistent with this heavenly glory, any more than Christ's having "compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way;" * for though he hath laid aside his passion, or liability to suffering, yet not his compassion.

3. Saints glorified come to us below by joy and exultation; so far as the spirits above know the prosperity of the church below, so far do they triumph and rejoice. Hence it is said, Luke xv. 7, "That joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." How glad are they when one is added to their number! That this joy is of saints glorified, is confirmed, ver. 10, for it is said, "There is joy in the presence of the holy angels," or angels of God. Additions to the church on earth, form an augmentation of the celestial inhabitants, and add to the honour of our Lord and master. It is melody to their spirits, and accents their triumphal songs, that another soul is snatched out of Satan's hands, and put into safe state for heaven. This way they themselves went, they travelled through these several stages, to salvation;† they experimentally know what blessedness attends every step, and find the issue to be good; and the more the happier. There is no envy in spiritual things.

4. By a daily accordance with the saint's prayers, and Christ's intercession for the militant church. The spirits of just men made perfect above are continually present with Christ, and know what our blessed advocate presents to the father on the behalf of the church

* Heb. iv. 15. v. 2. † Hâc itur ad astra.

militant, and have a similar concern for it. Our divines confess, that saints departed do in general pray for the church on earth, desiring the final deliverance of their fellow members from all miseries;* so the souls under the altar, cried with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth."† Full glad would they be that an end were put to these days of sinning, and they lift up their desires to God, which is their praying. But this doth not warrant men's invocation of saints; for they are ignorant of particular cases; "The dead know not any thing,"‡ nor can they impart any merits to men. What Papists say of glorified spirits seeing all things in the glass of the Trinity,‖ is a fancy; for that would make them omniscient as God is.

You will say, do saints glorified know nothing of affairs here below? I answer affirmatively,

(1.) Because they are intellectual spirits, of a large capacity; for they are equal with the angels.§

(2.) Possibly the angels, whom God sends as messengers into this lower world, may communicate what they know to them of church affairs; for they have a peculiar way of signifying their minds to each other.

(3.) As God's children die, and depart hence to heaven, they may bring them notice how things go on in this lower world.

(4.) Possibly they may learn something by revelation immediately from God; for doubtless, such as are in paradise must know what the apostle Paul knew when he was rapt up thither;¶ though even angels are ignorant of some things, for so our Lord

* Perkins on the Creed, p. 311.
† Rev. vi. 10.
‡ Eccles. ix. 5.
‖ In speculo Trinitatis.
§ Luke xx. 36.
¶ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

affirms, Matt. xxiv. 36, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Much less can men know all things, yet the glorified spirits are on a level with the angels.

Thus much for the agency of these spirits of just men made perfect, for promoting this communion.

II. How do the saints on earth come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and wherein consists this communion?

This being the subject of my text, I shall state it in these seven particulars:

1. Saints on earth come to the spirits of just men above in point of adoration; not of them, but of God with them, when we perform any part of worship in reference to the divine Majesty; we below are doing the same thing that the courtiers do in the presence chamber: we are fully assured that he is encompassed with angels and glorified saints; one cries to another, and saith, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory."* To this the saints on earth echo, saying, "Amen, so be it;" see Rev. v. 13, 14, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,—heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." There we find precentors and succentors in this blessed choir, saints above and saints below. He that converseth with a great king, hath relative communion with his whole court; worshippers on earth have some intercourse with those heavenly choristers and courtiers in the upper region.

2. In point of conversation, saints on earth walk by the same rule, according to which they act who are above; hence we pray, "Thy will be done on earth

* Isa. vi. 3.

as it is in heaven:"* spirits below walk in the same road that led the glorified saints to that uphill city; that strait and narrow way;† that way of the righteous, which is above to the wise, and hath a direct tendency to heaven: hence saith the apostle, concerning himself and all sincere Christians, Phil. iii. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven; πολίτευμα, our citizenship, our civil intercourse."‡ We act as freemen of the Jerusalem that is above, from whence we sprang, and whither we tend; living by heaven's laws, and going about our business with heavenly hearts. So the pearl grows in the sea, but shines in the sky. Christians are holy pilgrims, asking the way to Zion; these march through thick and thin to be where their brethren are; desiring the way as well as the end; holiness as well as happiness; yea, holiness is part of their happiness. These holy brethren are "partakers of the heavenly calling;"‖ and make it their business to "walk worthy of this calling."§

3. Saints below come to those above in point of delight and affection. Pious souls loved God's children whilst they were in the flesh; in this imperfect state, "saints on the earth were the excellent ones, in whom was all their delight." It was natural to them, they were taught of God to love one another.¶ This divine nature connects and unites hearts: as fraternity is a charm to the affections, much more do the spirits of just men made perfect, now purified and freed from the dregs of corruption and unloveliness, become the objects of the saints' love. Nor is it distance of place that alienates their affections; for the soul is not** where

* Matt. vi. 10. † Matt. vii. 14.
‡ Ut municipes cœlorum nos gerimus.—*Piscat.* ‖ Heb. iii. 1.
§ Eph. iv. 1—3. ¶ Psal. xvi. 3. 1 Thess. iv. 9.
** Anima non est ubi animat, sed ubi amat.

it animates, but where it loves; men may love an object a thousand miles off. "Whom having not seen, ye love,"* saith Peter. So, though saints below converse not personally with them above, yet their hearts are knit to them by a thousand bonds; they that are risen with Christ, set their affections on things, of course on persons, above, Christ, and all his lovely shining members with him.† The lover can go without actual locomotion; his heart removes to the object beloved though in a far country;‡ yea, sometimes distance endears cordial friends; and there is no such communion as by endeared affection; men may converse and not love; but they that truly love, do actually converse.

4. In point of imitation. The gracious soul on earth would be like the glorified saint in heaven. This is the command, Heb. xiii. 7, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." One while the Christian reflects on the exact life, fervent prayers, and great usefulness of such and such ministers and Christians as he was wont to converse with here below; and saith in himself, O that I had such firm faith, such flaming love, such exact holiness as I saw in such and such a one! I remember how such a one prayed, wept, wrestled, walked, and watched, I recollect his zeal for God, and his patience under the cross; O that I were like him! Another while the Christian considers, what such a saint is now, in heaven? what a bright taper of heavenly knowledge? what a flaming cherub of holy love? what a flying seraph of lively obedience? When, O when shall I be like to him? How far I am short! I

* 1 Pet. i. 8. † Col. iii. 1. ‡ Cant. iv. 8.

must follow, though not with equal paces: * I cannot go so fast as they, but I will hold forward as hard as I can, and hope to overtake them at last. Lord, help me, "that I may not be slothful, but a follower of them, who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises."† I will fly high, and aim at perfection.

5. In point of desire, hope, and expectation. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar."‡ This world is a prison; my companions, jailors, or prisoners; when shall I be set at liberty? come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; break down the prison door of flesh; say to the prisoner, Come forth. I thank God for ordinances, and communion of saints; "but I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."‖ O what a fine lovely company are those hundred and forty four thousand, "that have their father's name written in their foreheads, harping with their harps,"§ singing a new song. Methinks it were worth a world to be a day with that palm-bearing company, and to be employed in that heavenly music; well, I am with them already by hope; we are saved by hope, why may I not be with them in possession?¶ my title to that blessed state is the same as theirs; O that I were fit for it! I am often casting this firm and stedfast anchor of my soul, even hope, into that within the vail, and there it adheres, and there will I fix my confidence, and not on the fluid waves of this tumultuous sea!** I confess myself to be a stranger, and a pilgrim in the earth; I am seeking a better country, whither most of my best

* Non passibus æquis. † Heb. vi. 12. ‡ Psal. lxxxiv. 2. cxx. 5.
‖ Phil. i. 23. § Rev. xiv. 1—3. ¶ Rom. viii. 24. ** Heb. vi. 19.

kindred are gone, and whither I am aspiring*—O for the dawning of that blessed day!

6. In point of encouragement. It is not to be told what encouragement a Christian receives from a consideration of the spirits of the just now made perfect in heaven; partly, by thinking what they endured, and how grace bore their heads above water, and hearts above terror, under their sore trials. The apostle Peter sets Sarah, and other holy women, before the righteous women of his time, as remarkable examples, and saith, "Whose daughters ye are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement," 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6. These holy souls have broken through the pikes, God was with them, they fainted not, but though their "outward man perished, yet their inward man was renewed day by day;"† they are arrived at the end of their hopes, the salvation of their souls."‡ And why may not I? God is the same God, I have the same spirit of faith; I believe, and therefore I speak;‖ but above all, when I consider whither free grace hath brought them. O the perfect rest their souls have! "In God's presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand, there are pleasures for evermore." And why may not my heart be glad? why may not my flesh rest in hope? O happy souls, shall I ever reach you? why not? I have heard the same complaints from those here on earth, who are now triumphing in heaven; God is admired in them, and why not in me? "For he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."§ And if ever God was admired in bringing a forlorn creature to heaven, he may have the greatest revenue of glory from me.

* Heb. xi. 14. † 2 Cor. iv. 16. ‡ 1 Peter i. 9.
‖ 2 Cor. iv. 13. § 2 Thess. i. 10.

7. Once more, saints below come to the spirits of just men made perfect above, and that in point of possession.

You will say, these things are contradictory: are they in heaven? I answer,

They are, and they are not. Their souls are not gone out of their bodies, and ascended into the upper region, to be totally free from sin, and perfect in grace; they are yet in this lower world, in a state of imperfection, and so far they are different from the spirits of just men made perfect.* But yet a gracious soul on earth hath possession given to him already:—

(1.) *In capite*, in the head, that is, Christ: so members are eminently and representatively where the head is; Eph. ii. 6, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Christians below, have already taken up their places in Christ; as the country sits in parliament, by its representatives.

(2.) *In pignore*, in the pledge; or rather, in *arrhabone*, in the earnest.† For the pledge is restored, but the earnest is kept; as it is part of the payment, and ensures the whole sum; God hath given us both, for our Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven, is a pledge and anticipation of our advancement; "For Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept;"‡ as first fruits assured Jews of the whole harvest;‖ so it is here. Yea, Christians have the blessed earnest of the spirit within them, that is, beginnings, foretastes of glory, like the grapes of Canaan in the wilderness of this world.

(3.) *In signo*, in the sign and seal, that is, either external, as in baptism and the Lord's supper;§ or

* 1 Cor. xiii. 10. † Pignus redditur, arrhabo retinetur.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20. ‖ Eph. i. 14. § Eph. i. 13. iv. 30.

internal, "the seal of the holy spirit," 2 Cor. i. 22. Thus the merchant seals his property. This is the grace of God in truth; the graces of the Spirit, faith, love, hope; which are the clearest evidences of the title.*

(4.) *In pretio*, in the price. It is a purchased possession. This is the foundation of all the rest, though I mention it last. Heaven was forfeited by us, Christ has recovered it for us.

But, you ask, doth God sell heaven for a price? In reply let me say,

The principal design of Christ, in laying down his life, was to deliver us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, with the guilt and condemnation due to us for sin;† and God was so well pleased with Christ's satisfaction, that he withholds nothing from us; no, not his dearest love, nor a room in the highest heavens.

Now go backward, for the certainty of the believer's arrival in heaven, as if he were already possessed.‡— It is paid for, and God will be just to his Son in performing his part.—God hath given outward and inward seals to secure it to them.—There is a pledge and earnest, which is a good part of the possession.—And they have actual possession in Christ their head. And surer ways than these cannot be expected or devised. Thus we have brought the Christian below, to the spirits of just men above.

3. I shall very briefly shew how this is brought to pass.

(1.) This proceeds from God the Father's everlasting love; for both saints glorified, and those who are

* Eph. i. 14. † 1 Thess. i. 10. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. viii. 31, 32.

‡ Ad quos accessimus etiam in hac vitâ, adhuc militantes, quia una fide ac Spiritu, cum capite Christo societatem habemus.

sanctified, are the objects of God's purpose; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. They are carried as by a river under ground, till converting grace distinguisheth them from others. As there are elect angels, so there are elect saints; and God's purpose according to election must stand;* "All that the Father hath given to me, saith Christ, shall come unto me;"† this is the first spring of motion in the work of man's salvation; the first link in the golden chain, which draws God and sinners together; "Whom he he did predestinate, them he also called," &c. Rom. viii. 29, 30.

(2.) From Christ's meritorious undertaking. He that was God became man, that he might bring man to God; he suffered the "just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. Christ's blood is the only cement that unites God and man together; "He makes peace through the blood of his cross." The rending of the vail of his flesh, opened a new and living way to the holy of holies.‡ But that is not all, this blood also hath connected men together; Eph. ii. 14, 15, "He is our peace, who hath made both," that is, Jews and Gentiles, "one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Jesus in Hebrew, and Christ in Greek, to signify the uniting of both, that both might be fellow-citizens with the saints."‖ And Christ's prayer is, "That all his may be one."§ Nay, still more than this, "He gathers together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him," Eph. i. 10. Crowned saints, and unsinning angels, all are brought under one head, Christ, so the word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι

* Rom. ix. 9. † John vi. 37. ‡ Col. i. 20. Heb. x. 19—22.
‖ Eph. ii. 19. § John xvii. 21.

doth signify; relating either to houses broken down and scattered pieces, being brought together; or an army shattered and restored to its ranks under its general. Thus our Lord brings sinners together.

(3.) This proceeds from the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost. God chooseth his children to salvation, "through sanctification of the Spirit," 2 Thess. ii. 13. The same Spirit works in all God's saints, whether under the old testament, or under the new, in all ages, among all nations; "We having the same spirit," saith Paul, that is, with David of old; 2 Cor. iv. 13, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one spirit."* All God's children are animated by the same spirit; it runs through all the veins of Christ's mystical body, and makes them have a tendency towards each other; the saints above towards those below, and those on earth towards the spirits of just men made perfect. As the saints in heaven, with great acclamations, behold the church's conflicts and triumphs here below, and long for the completing of their number. So, God's poor children in this afflicted, conflicting state, being supported and quickened by the Spirit, expect a rest; Gal. v. 5, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Nor will the waters of tribulation quench, but rather kindle the fire of this zeal; for in these fiery trials, "the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon them,"† by which they are carried out of themselves, and beyond themselves to heavenly objects, as Stephen was.

(4.) This proceeds from the gospel covenant, the blessed new testament dispensation. The covenant of grace binds God and souls together, and it binds souls to one another; all believers are connected in this

* 1 Cor. xii. 13. † 1 Peter iv. 14.

bond, and become "one stick in God's hand."* Religion is of a binding nature, it gathers persons and things homogeneous, or of the like kind; they are knit together, and both joined to the "Lord in a perpetual covenant."† Nor doth death disannull, but complete it, and consummate its purpose; for on behalf of the glorified, all their graces are perfected; love has reached its proper element, which as it mounts upwards to God, so it descends to all fellow members in this lower world; this permanent love reigns triumphantly in the world above;‡ and faith is the chief grace by which we live in this world; these two fulfil law and gospel: they who are of faith, "the same are the children of Abraham;" and doubtless Abraham will have respect unto his seed, and take them into his bosom when they die, as he must be endeared to them while they live.‖ But you will say, Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel doth not acknowledge us.§ I answer, good interpreters understand the passage thus: That Israel was so degenerate, that if those pious patriarchs were alive, they would not own them for their legitimate posterity. It may however be a truth, that glorified saints in heaven have no personal knowledge of particular persons on earth; but in general they understand their dispositions and circumstances, and so far regard them as is allowable by the laws of that heavenly country. By virtue of this covenant all the saints are of the "household of faith, the family in heaven and on earth;" all one Father's children, fellow heirs;¶ so it is said even of the Gentiles, Eph. iii. 6, "That they should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise, in Christ by the gospel."

* Ezek. xxxvii. 17. † Jer. l. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.
‖ Heb. xi. 39. Rom. xiii. 8 1 John iii. 23. Gal. iii. 7.
§ Isa. lxiii. 16. ¶ Gal. vi. 3, 10. Eph. iii. 15.

This is an important text, which details the privileges of Christians.—They are co-heirs.—Concorporated, being of the same body.—They have excellent companions, all this proceeding from a gospel promise.—And, that promise founded on Christ, the mediator of this blessed covenant. See another similitude, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Thus much for the doctrinal part.

From this subject the following inferences may be drawn for the purpose of information.

1. That the soul of man is of a peculiar and wonderful nature.

(1.) It is far beyond and above the soul of a brute. Of the beast it is said, Gen. ix. 4, "But flesh, with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat." So that let out the blood of the animal, you let out all its vital power; it is dissolved at death; the spirit of a beast goeth downward.* Whether beasts shall retain, or regain their existence, I have nothing to say, though some maintain it. Yet, doubtless, the soul of man is more excellent than that of a brute, in either its present operations, or future existence. A beast can only look on objects of sense present before it. But the soul of man can look backward by recollection, inward by reflection, forward by anticipation, and upward by contemplation; it hath a wonderful sagacity, and excellent faculties, it is capable of moral good and evil; having a conscience that can bear witness of actions or thoughts, to excuse or accuse.† It can ascend to heaven, descend to hell, and travel through the universe in the twinkling of an eye.

(2.) As for its future existence in a separate state, that I have proved before. In Matt. xvi. 26, the passage speaks of "losing a man's own soul;" and again we read of "God's destroying both soul and body:"‡ but you

* Eccl. iii. 21. † Rom. ii. 15. ‡ Matt. x. 28.

must not understand this, as though men should have no souls, or that they should be reduced to nothing, but only of losing the happiness of the soul, by its being cast into hell, to be tormented for ever. In this case, men will wish they had no souls, or that they never had a being. But that there are different states for immortal spirits in the other world, the parable of Dives and Lazarus doth sufficiently demonstrate.

2. Though in the other world it is said, the spirits of just men are made perfect; yet this doth not exclude the perfection of their bodies: these also,

(1.) Shall be made perfect at the resurrection; for the apostle saith, "The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," &c. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;"* that is, Christ's: which, doubtless, shines as bright now or brighter than it did at his transfiguration, when his "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."† Such sparkling glory shall the bodies of saints have; indeed they shall be more like spirits than bodies, so transparent, that as one saith, all the veins, nerves, and muscles, shall be seen, as in a glass; so agile and nimble, that they shall instantaneously move from one end of the heavens to the other, even as a thought; so powerful, that they shall be able to move mountains. They shall be freed from all imperfection, and be absolutely perfect as Adam's body was before he sinned, possibly better. And as the bodies of the dead shall be raised and glorified at the great day, so shall also such as shall be found alive, be changed, perfected, and glorified; which is a mystery possibly declared to Paul when rapt up into the third heavens,‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

* 1 Cor. xv. 42—44. Phil. iii. 21. † Matt. xvii. 2.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 4, 5.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first, and they which are alive, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

(2.) But though the text speaks of the spirits of just men made perfect, yet it doth not exclude even the bodies of just men made perfect; for there were then three bodies in heaven already, Enoch before the law, Elijah under the law, and Christ under the gospel: how they were taken up, whether Enoch was taken up in a whirlwind, as Elijah was, or as Christ in a cloud, we know not; but they were escorted into paradise, the third heaven, the place of the blessed, and have taken possession of the land of life. So they are not only definitely in heaven, as souls are in a state, but circumscriptively as bodies are said to be in a place; and there we shall find them. But it is only said of their spirits that we are come to them, not of their bodies.

3. It follows that wicked men on earth have communion with devils and lost spirits in hell. This I gather from the rule of contraries, and it is intimated 1 Cor. x. 20, "I would not that you should have fellowship with devils." This is done two ways:

(1.) Sensibly, knowingly, or by plain contract: that such a thing hath been, testimonies might be produced. Some indeed have denied that there are any such beings as witches or persons confederate with the devil; but scripture and history speak another language. Scripture tells us of Jannes, Jambres, Balaam, Manasseh, Simon, Elymas, and the witch of Endor; and of the law condemning such to be cut off by the sword of justice. But I shall not enlarge here, since Mr. Glanvill's treatise and others are full of stories of

* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

such as have, by wicked ceremonies, maintained familiar correspondence with the infernal fiend.

(2.) Some maintain familiarity with Satan, who little suspect it, and will not believe it; as all wicked workers and graceless sinners; Satan tempts, they consent, and are led captive in invisible chains at his pleasure. "He is that prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works effectually ἐνεργοῦντος, in the children of disobedience;"* he commands, they obey; they hold a frightful correspondence with him, and maintain conformity to the devil's sins, and those of lost souls, lying, cursing, envy, pride, hatred of true godliness, heart-murder, and such like spiritual wickedness; which are the devil's proper sins, who is the "ruler of the darkness of the world,"† and holds his black hand over their eyes; "for he is the god of this world, that blindeth the minds of them that believe not."‡ Poor sinners will defy the devil, shudder at mentioning him, yet cordially deify him, and embrace his criminal suggestions. Woe, woe to such poor sinners; "he that committeth sin is of the devil!"‖ Look to it: you are acting the devil's part when you commit sin, and show yourselves to be of your father the devil.§ You are your own tempters; so saith the apostle, James i. 14, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

4. Great is the privilege of Christianity, wherein God hath delivered us from the "power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13. O blessed change! "To be turned from darkness to light; from the power of Satan to God!"¶ What a mercy it is to a malefactor con-

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. Eph. ii. 2. † Eph. vi. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4.
‖ 1 John iii. 8. § John viii. 44. ¶ Acts xxvi. 18.

demned, going pinioned up the ladder to be hanged, when he immediately receives a pardon, a new life, a new nature, high privileges and blessings. What a mercy, when a man is taken out of prison from fetters, fellow-slaves, a sturdy imperious gaoler, and is carried into his prince's presence-chamber, where he converseth familiarly with the prince and his favourites? Such is the case of a convert; he hath familiar intercourse with God, Christ, holy angels, and with quick and dead, whom he may call brethren, though he never saw them here below. Though God be a dreadful Judge, a consuming fire, yet in Christ he is a reconciled Father, and makes all the creatures to become friends, and angels attendants, "for they are ministering spirits to the poorest heirs of salvation." All things in this world are theirs in Christ, and tending to their good.*

O what a large charter hath a child of God! "he inherits all things." Devils cannot hurt him, all creatures shall help him; saints on earth pray for him, and are his companions; saints in heaven are his friends. O happy souls! Grace makes a Christian a friend to himself, a friend to God, a favourite of heaven, and he shall be at last an inhabitant in the glorious mansions above. All this comes by the gospel dispensation. O admire the riches of grace! 2 Tim. i. 9, 10.

The passage which has been considered may lead to examination.

Who are those that have arrived at this privilege, that are thus come to the spirits of just men made perfect? It is not every one's attainment; there are some souls, "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of pro-

* Heb. i. 14. 1 Cor iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28.

mise, having no hope, and without God in the world."* This is a forlorn state: better have no souls than graceless souls: better never to have been joined to the living, than not to be united to departed saints, that live in heaven. Alas! how few understand what this means?

It would be too tedious to run over the characters of gracious souls, that are members of Christ's mystical body on earth, and so associated in near relation to, and communion with, the glorified spirits above.

I shall but briefly glance at these two things in the text, that men are considered as *just*, and as *made perfect.*

And how are these in unison with the character of all pious persons here on earth?

1. Pious persons are just or righteous, and that in these two respects: as having *inherent*, and *imputed* righteousness.

(1.) Inherent; and so by consequence, a practical, exercised justice and righteousness: Gen. vi. 9, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God;" the goodness of his state produced the goodness of his life. There must be a right principle, or there can never be a right practice: the tree must be good, or there can be no good fruit. Are your hearts renewed? Has sin lost its dominion? Do you square your actions according to Scripture rule? A godly man is called a just man in Scripture;† he is just to God, giving to God the things that are God's; to man the things that are man's; to the soul, to the body, to the world, their dues and no more. Do you make it your business to do "justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?" Mic. vi. 8.

* Eph. ii. 12.

† Job. xxvii. 6. Psalm xxxvii. 12. Prov. xxix. 10. Isa. xxvi. 7

Alas, friends, it is not an assent to truth, a profession of godliness, nor a mere notion that will do, but a saving work on the heart; "a putting on the new man, which after God is created, in righteousness and holiness of truth;"* and then being righteous before God, as Zechariah and Elizabeth, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;" † and doing "righteousness at all times." ‡ This is a being suited and squared to the whole will of God. No man is just, but such a one as makes it his business to be universally upright: so saith the apostle, 1 John iii. 7, "Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

(2.) They are just, or righteous also by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is יהוה צדקנו the "Lord our righteousness;" the author is God alone; "it is God that justifieth;" the efficient cause is free grace, "We are justified freely by his grace," and not our deserts; the meritorious cause is the redemption, which is in Christ; the means of applying Christ's righteousness is faith; receiving this free gift, "We are justified by the faith of Christ." || By this means it is, that a poor sinner standing at the bar of God, as a guilty malefactor condemned by the law, is cleared and acquitted, and accepted by God as if he had never offended. So that neither Satan, nor conscience, nor law, nor justice, hath any thing to lay to his charge; hence the apostle's challenge, Rom. viii. 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If the judge acquit the prisoner, no matter what the jailor, or fellow prisoners say. This, this is that which all the servants of God own, desire, stand by, and delight in, above

* Eph. iv. 24. † Luke i. 6. ‡ Psalm cvi. 3.
|| Jer. xxiii. 6. Rom. viii. 33. iii. 22, 24. Gal. ii. 16.

any inherent righteousness; so Paul must be found in Christ, or he is lost for ever, "Not having" saith he, "mine own righteousness, which is by the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Thus the church is clothed with the sun,* that is, the righteousness of Christ; "These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."† No standing before the holy, righteous, sin-avenging judge, but in a righteousness, commensurate with the demands of infinite justice, and that is Christ's only, who was, and is God equal with the Father, whose deity gives value to his sufferings in the humane nature. O blessed souls that are thus just! These shall enter amongst the just ones.

2. As they are just ones, so they are perfect: and none can come to the spirits made perfect, but such as are in a gospel sense made perfect, even in this world, two ways: *by integrity*, and *by proficiency*, and a constant tendency towards perfection.

(1.) A believer is in some sense perfect. God bids Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, to walk before him, and to be perfect.‡ Job was perfect and upright; that is, with an evangelical perfection of parts, though defective in point of degree; for he saith, "If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."‖ In this sense Paul disclaims perfection, but asserts it as the characteristic of all believers in the former sense; "As many as be perfect, let them be thus minded:"§ and elsewhere, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,"¶ that is, serious Christians. Our Lord himself tells us what is requisite to this

* Phil. iii. 8, 9. Rev. xii. 1.
† Rev. vii. 14.
‡ Gen. xvii. 1.
‖ Job i. 1. ix. 20.
§ Phil. iii. 12, 15.
¶ 1 Cor. ii. 6.

gospel perfection: Matt. xix. 21, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me:" Mark adds, "Take up the cross." * A cheerful, real, universal, perpetual compliance with gospel terms is this gospel perfection; there is an endeavour to resemble Jesus Christ—"Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master," † both in character and possession of glory. This is the great business of poor ministers, "warning and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." ‡ A child is a perfect man as to the number of bodily members, though defective in size: so the convert hath all the limbs and lineaments of the new creature—he hath light in the understanding, rectitude in the will, regularity in the affections, tenderness and faithfulness in the conscience. A gracious soul hath all the graces of the Spirit—faith, love, repentance, the fear of God, and humility; though alas! but in an inferior degree. I may truly say, that the same grace for kind is in the meanest saint on earth, as is in the most elevated child of God on earth or in heaven, yet not the same measure of grace. The apostle Peter writes to them that have "obtained like precious faith with himself," || and other apostles: like precious, not like glorious; like for quality, not for quantity: there are babes in Christ, as well as strong men: § a child may hold a ring in his hand as well, though not so fast as a strong man. Grace hath its different degrees, and even its ebbings and flowings: but is there truth in the inward parts? Hast thou given the key of thy heart to God? Darest thou set thyself before the heart-searching God, as a glass in the sun, that he may

* Mark x. 21. † Luke vi. 40. ‡ Col. i. 28.
|| 2 Pet. i. 1. § Heb. v. 12—14.

look into thee, through thee? Dost thou say as Job, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity?" * and as David, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart?" † Do you love trying truths, sermons, and providences, approving your hearts entirely to God, doing all as in his sight, and aiming at his glory?

(2.) A proficiency in grace. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." ‡ Christians are never at the summit in this world; "They go from strength to strength, till every one in Zion appears before God." || It is as natural for a living child to grow, as to breathe. Grace came from above, and like pillars of smoke ascends upwards. Heaven is the Christian's centre; "They that are risen with Christ, seek the things above." § Every thing tends to the perfection of its being, grace much more. The Christian is still short, and would be better; still something is lacking in his faith, hope, love, or patience; it grieves him at his heart, that he can serve God no better, that he hath so many strong corruptions, such distractions in holy duties, such deadness, forgetfulness, or levity of spirits: he is still labouring at the pump to draw out grace, to remove defilement, to rub off spots, to "cleanse away all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, that he may perfect holiness in the fear of God." ¶ The Christian is never right unless with God, never well till he be with God above in his immediate presence: he almost envies the happiness of glorified spirits, and aspires to be as good as they; watching, warring, wrestling, praying, obeying, and acting, if by any means he may "attain

* Job xxxi. 6. † Psalm xxvi. 2. cxxxix. 23.
‡ Prov. iv. 18. || Psalm lxxxiv. 7. § Col. iii. 1.
¶ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

to the resurrection of the dead,"* namely, that blesssed state which saints attain, at the great day of resurrection. Hence saith blessed Paul, " I follow after,—reaching forth to things before; I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."† That is a low strain of spirit, and below a Christian frame, which aims at no more grace, than will keep soul and hell asunder; that is, he is afraid of damnation, therefore would have some grace, but studies not to be perfect, as God is perfect; longs not for communion with God, but is well content to live without God, if only he may not perish; not considering that the enjoyment of God is heaven, and banishment from God is the worst part of hell. Oh, saith the good Christian, let me have more grace, more sensible intercourse with God! more exchange of affection with my dear Lord, and this will stay me till I arrive at the haven of rest, and see God on those mountains of spices.

Further, something tending to conviction and conducive to humiliation may be addressed to sinners and saints, on several accounts.

First, Poor graceless sinners are deeply guilty and unadvised:

1. In neglecting and slighting this blessed relation to God, to saints on earth, and glorified spirits above. How can men think they shall go to heaven where saints are, when they are not saints; nay, that do not so much as pretend to be saints? though they have often heard, " that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and that no unclean thing shall enter into that city;"‡ yet they live in sin, and are in danger of dying in sin. Some pretend a desire to go to heaven, but will not so much as associate themselves with such here, as shall go to glory; they are mere strangers to

* Phil. iii. 11. † Verse 12—14. ‡ Heb. xii. 14. Rev. xxi. 27.

the life of heaven, the road to heaven, and the manner and employment of the celestial inhabitants; as though men could leap from the dunghill of sin to the throne of glory; "Let no man deceive you, God is not mocked; such as a man sows, such shall he reap;"* again, "Let no man deceive you with vain words."† Sin will exclude you out of heaven, bring down God's wrath, and shut you up in hell; think not to dance with devils all day, and sup with Christ at night; to associate with wicked men here, and be joined with saints above; when you die you will be wofully mistaken. You cannot lie in Delilah's lap now, and in Abraham's bosom in the other world. You must be made ready here, or never meet God hereafter.

2. Some magnify, yea, almost deify departed saints, but vilify and condemn, and despise living saints, that walk by the same rule, are actuated by the same spirit, and are marching to the same goal of glory with the other. How much do Papists honour the memory of the apostles, and how liberally canonize as saints the ancient fathers, Ignatius, Jerome, Augustin, Chrysostom, and others; yet vent their spleen at those who preach the same doctrine, live by the same rules, serve the same God, and hope to enjoy him in the same heaven with those pious ancient fathers and martyrs. But Papists, and some others follow the copy of their predecessors, the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, to whom he said, Matt. xxiii. 29, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous." Even Horace could observe this,‡ "Invidious spirits hate virtue which they see living, but admire what is gone out of their sight:"

* Gal. vi. 7. † Eph. v. 5, 6.

‡ Virtutem incolumen odimus, sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi.

present truth galls them, but what is past hurts not. If Peter were now alive they would hate him as they do his successors: but this fallacy men willingly put upon themselves, that they may sin more freely, and sleep in sin with more security.

3. Some are flat atheists, and disbelieve the life to come; or do not regard the state of the blessed or the lost, in another world. They look upon a future state of retribution but as a romance, hatched in the brains of melancholy fools or cunning priests, to keep the world in awe; but they shall find it otherwise, and death will open their eyes: whom the light doth not convince, the fire shall. Men will be first libertines, then atheists; these are near akin. But if there is a God, he must be just, and not indifferent to good or evil, and then there will be a final judgment, and a sentence to heaven or hell. But this point hath been so fully handled by excellent pens, that I shall wave it, only wish, that before this description of men leap desperately into another world, they would make a pause, and consider, Whether they be brutes or men? who made them? what they were made for? whether there be not moral good and evil? whether conscience does not sometimes rebuke them for their faults? whether scripture be from God, or man, or Satan? whether the greatest tyrants have not been afraid of a future judgment? whether they be able to disprove a future state? whether prudence would not prompt them to take the safest side? Men are undone for want of consideration: the invited guests "made light of it," Matt. xxii. 5, ἀμελήσαντες, they would not take it into their thoughts. This is the grand disease of this lethargic age; nothing sinks into their minds: "But in the latter days they shall consider these things." *

* Jer. xxx. 24.

4. The most part of men are surprisingly slothful; they stand idle all the day in the market-place. Few will take such pains for their souls, as they take for their bodies, yea, or for their beasts. It is a shame to compare the pains the Greeks took at their Olympic games, running, wrestling, &c. which they did for a corruptible crown, (it may be of flowers or bays,) but alas, how few will strive and endeavour to take the kingdom of heaven, or an incorruptible crown by a holy violence.* Men sit still and think it should drop into their hands; or that they should be rocked asleep, and whirled to heaven unawares in a dream: "But if the righteous scarcely be saved," that is, with great difficulty, "where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"† Do not you read in the Bible, and ecclesiastical histories, what sweat, tears, labour, hazard, blood, and torments it hath cost the saints to enter in at this strait gate? and do you think God hath altered the terms of salvation to gratify your sloth? No, no, if you would go to heaven, you must shake off sloth, ply the oars, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." ‡ But more of this anon.

Secondly, God's people are much to blame on four accounts:

1. In mourning for their departed relations as persons "without hope."‖ Some are affected and sorrow as if their dead relatives were quite extinguished and lost. Indeed if they were graceless, there is ground for lamentation, though in this you exceed bounds, and ought to submit to the will of God; but if they were truly religious, they are not lost, but safe with God. There is a difference worth notice, between David's

* 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.
† 1 Pet. iv. 18.
‡ Phil. ii. 12. 2 Pet. i. 10.
‖ 1 Thess. iv. 13.

mourning for wicked Absalom, and the child born in adultery, of which he had good hopes.* It becomes Christians to moderate their passions. It is true, it is due to the dead that they be lamented at funerals, and the contrary incurs a threatened judgment; but this must be done submissively and piously. Are you grieved at their felicity, when angels attended their departing souls through the devil's regions, uninjured? they left their body of death with that of earth, their graces were perfected, the whole court of heaven came forth to bid them welcome with acclamations, and they were embraced in the arms of the blessed Jesus. Surely they would be loth to return back again to us in this polluted world: methinks I hear them saying as our Lord did, "Weep not for us, but weep for yourselves,"† that you are so long detained from this felicity which we possess.

2. What a shame it is that Christians are no more ready to follow this blessed company who are landed safely in heaven. May we not cry out as Monica, Austin's mother, What do I here,‡ when so many of our choice friends are gone? We linger behind, as Lot in Sodom. A good man finding himself unwilling to die, cried out, Go out, my soul, go out of this sinful flesh.‖ Our relations are gone, they want our company to fill up the number of the church triumphant: have we not as much need to be with them? You will say, we cannot go till God set us at liberty. I answer, but you may reach out your arms, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly:" this is the character of all good souls: "The Spirit and the bride say, come:" it is the badge on the saint's sleeve, "to wait for the Son from heaven."§ You will say, I

* 2 Sam. xii. 23. xviii. 33. † Luke xxiii. 28.
‡ Quid hîc facio? ‖ Egredere, anima mea, egredere.
§ Rev. xxii. 17, 20. 1 Thess. i. 10.

doubt my interest in him, I am at uncertainties. I answer, whose fault is that? God hath given you time and means to obtain assurance; it is our sloth and negligence that keep us under: be humbled for sin, and make more haste; "be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." *

3. We do not, so profitably as we ought, improve the departure of our friends, and especially the death of our christian friends, those now in the presence of God, in such proper and laudable ways as I have mentioned before.—Quickening our hearts in God's worship: O, do saints above praise God at this rate?—Do I live with such exactness and circumspection as might be expected?—is my heart carried out with delight in God, and saints above for God's sake?—Do I imitate the piety, zeal, and heavenliness, which I saw in them, and which must be much more now?—Do I desire, long, and make all ready to be with them?—Do I animate myself in my christian course, from a consideration of what they were, and what they now are?—Or, do I already possess foretastes of that blessed state, such as God allows and grants me? Alas, friends, we plod on in ordinary duties, but I fear we have not yet reached this high and noble gospel duty and privilege, of coming to the spirits of just men made perfect; and by this means we lose many motives, helps, engagements, and encouragements in our christian course. Where is the Christian almost that hath studied this point? Woe is me, such a one set out in the christian race after me, but is now got beyond me! I am a poor, dull scholar in this petty school, but he hath commenced in the university above! I am labouring under corruptions, temptations, desertions, such a one is got above all;

* Heb. vi. 12.

surely my time will come: oh when shall it once be?

4. Alas, Christians are to blame that they improve christian society here to no better purpose. You see many of our dear friends have left us, we can have no personal converse with them any more in this world, there are some yet left behind, and God only knows, how long, or short a time we may enjoy them.—Alas, that we should so seldom meet together for conference, prayer, or such religious exercises. It is said, Mal. iii. 16, "Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another." Oh, whence this strangeness? Is it not want of love, which is a uniting grace?—When we do meet, alas, how unsavoury, how unprofitable is our discourse? how little to edification? We squander away much time in telling news, or impertinent things. Is this the language of heaven? will this afford comfort in reflecting upon it?—Do not we fall out, and contend, wrangle, and pick quarrels, provoke one another to anger, fly out into passion, and which is worse, let the sun go down on our wrath? Do we not maintain endless grudges, grow implacable, stand upon terms, and refuse to be reconciled? Alas for us! Is this the language or carriage of saints in heaven? Can we think to go to heaven and not agree in the way? Shall one heaven hold us, and shall not one church hold us? Surely God will humble us for this before death, if we belong to him, or else woe to us. Will these grudgings be a comfort to us at death when the judge is at the door?* Away, away with such unbecoming frames.—Narrowness or selfishness of spirit, is very unbecoming the children of God: have we not all one Father? are we not members one of another? should not every member contribute to the good of the body?

* James v. 9.

should not all the bees bring honey to the hive? That was a sad complaint, "All seek their own, none the things of Jesus Christ:" * never such selfishness as at this day! Alas, we are fallen into the dregs of time, "when the love of many waxeth cold:† love seeketh not her own." ‡ Can we think this selfish frame is according to the pattern above? Do not those celestial inhabitants unite in this centre, God's glory and their mutual comfort? How far are we short of them? nay, do we not act contrary to them?

But you say, they are not of my way or opinion. I answer, examine the difference: is it enough to produce separation, and cause distance amongst them that own so many unities as you find in Eph. iv. 4—6? "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Phil. iii. 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

But you object that they are faulty in their conduct. And let me ask, art not thou so too in some respects? If however, they are professors, praying persons, willing to join with Christians, thou must admonish, instruct, and seek to recover them; "Restore them with the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. Think them not incorrigible, till thou hast tried all means.

But, say you, I live quietly, and such a course will beget trouble. In reply I would say, man is a sociable creature, "Woe be to him that is alone!" || You must have some society, why not christian society? David would choose to be a companion of them that feared God. § "Fellowship in the gospel" commenced the first day of the Philippians' conversion to Christ, Phil.

* Phil. ii. 21. † Matt. xxiv. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.
|| Eccles. iv. 9—12. § Psalm cxix. 63.

i. 5. As soon as Paul was converted, he essayed to join with the disciples. * Suspect your christianity, if you live loose: it is natural for Christians to associate. Be sure you study duty, not consequences.

O but, say you, such a one is of a cross, peevish humour, not sociable. That may be, but there are also Christians of a sweet, mild, and condescending disposition, take these for thy intimate associates: and if any prove morose, churlish, and untoward, remember God tries thy patience, and exercises thy faith, love, humility, and forbearance, which it is very fit should be improved: and they must bear with thee, as well as thou with them: God bears with you both, and if there were no provocation, forbearance would not be a duty.

Once more, the subject furnishes instruction in righteousness. If it be so, that there is such an association, and communion between saints on earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, then learn these seven lessons:

1. That humility and condescension is no diminution of persons' honour and advancement. It is said of the infinite God, Psalm cxiii. 4—6, "The Lord is high above all nations, his glory is above the heavens,—— who humbleth himself to behold things in heaven and earth." † The holy angels are attendants on the meanest saint on earth: the glorified spirits forget not what once they were, and what their brethren still are on earth, and do good offices for them. Precious Mr. Baxter thinks saints in heaven contribute to the happiness of saints on earth. His words are these: "The sun shines on the stars, and stars shine one upon another, and upon this lower world. This is no diminution of Christ's honour, that he makes use of fellow-creatures to our joy. Christ himself stooped to

* Acts ix. 26. † Heb. i. 14.

wash his disciples' feet; and the more generous men's spirits are, the more humble they are." Be clothed with humility:* it is the finest ornament that any can put on; it is the crown of every virtue, and the grace of every grace. Let us learn from hence, "to condescend to men of low degree:" † glorified spirits stoop lower to us, than we can do to the meanest saint on earth. Away with supercilious scorning of the meanest creature, much less of the humblest child of God: think it no degrading of yourselves to stoop to the meanest offices; yea, the apostle exhorts to a hard task, Phil. ii. 3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself." A gracious spirit hath his eyes looking inward, and sees more spots in himself than he knows or can believe to be in others; and this makes him humble.

2. That it is a Christian's great concern to gain sinners to Christ. The saints that were lately on earth, are now spirits of just men made perfect; whatever service they do for the church now, they cannot be so efficient in it as they were wont to be, whilst they were in this lower world; at least, in the same way and manner: their places are empty, they would be glad to know that they are filled up. Let us labour to be instruments to produce joy in heaven: let us mourn that righteous and merciful men are taken away; and let us study, discourse, and pray, for filling up such vacuities: not only ministers, but private Christians may do much this way. I have read of a pious ancient Christian, that by his going to discourse familiarly with his neighbours at plough, and in their shops, about soul concerns, had been an instrument in converting forty persons to Christ. O noble performance!

* 1 Pet. v. 5. † Rom. xii. 16.

Certainly it is a high honour to have a hand in such a work: it is more than Alexander's conquest of the world. "Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20. This increaseth the church militant, and by consequence the church triumphant. It is not the usual employment of angels, or glorified spirits: God's ordinary method is to effect this by Moses and the prophets, and not by raising persons from the dead, * either to bring the glorified from heaven, or the wicked from hell, to declare what they have seen or felt in the other world. O therefore let us use all means to bring home souls to God; "On some let us have compassion, using gentleness; others let us save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." † Let us, whether ministers or others, struggle hard to save sinners; for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for the church's sake, for sinners' sake, for our own sakes; for every soul converted by us, adds a jewel to our crown; "yes, is our very crown of rejoicing," 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

3. That it is the glory of the creature to be a candidate for heaven; such souls are joined already to the celestial inhabitants, "to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; to God the judge of all." Such honour have all his saints, above kings and princes on earth; though never so poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, they are precious in God's eyes, and truly honourable.‡ Hence the apostle James stirs up attention, when he introduces this paradox, James ii. 5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?"

* Luke xvi. 31. † Jude, 22, 23. ‡ Isa. xliii. 4.

It is true, they are in disguise, but yet kings; the world knows them not,* but these silly heads are destined to wear a diadem. O happy souls! Who would not be of this number? Theodosius accounted it a higher honour to be Christ's servant, than emperor of the world. You are happy here, and will be happier hereafter. Your estate lies much in reversion. Oh have pity upon your never-dying souls! Scorn and trample upon riches, pleasures, and honours of this world. Set yourselves for another world. Get furnished with saving grace, which is the seed of immortality. Avoid soul-destroying sins. Attend on ordinances. Walk according to the rule of the divine word. "Worship God in the spirit. Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."† Give up yourselves in covenant to God, seek his glory, be jealous of yourselves, search your hearts, make him witness of your actions, and daily put your souls into his hands. Thus lay hold on eternal life. By this means you will be of the number of saints here, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven.

4. That Christian love and unity is a blessed thing. The saints on earth and in heaven are become one; and shall not the saints on earth be one? Divisions are odious and dangerous among all sorts of people, but scandalous and ominous among church members. It is the devil's maxim, as well as Machiavel's, *divide et impera;* make division and get dominion: ruin enters in at this door. Our Saviour saith, "Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation."‡ Histories make this clear, both in church and state. How earnest is the blessed apostle about this, 1 Cor. i. 10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

* 1 John iii. 1. † Phil. iii. 3. ‡ Matt. xii. 25.

that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Alas! that factious spirits should open the veins and cut asunder the sinews of Christ's mystical body. Woe to us! for our divisions there are great thoughts of heart. What a number of bonds do these sever; the bond of doctrine, of discipline, of love, and of the spirit; and many mutual endearings and strong obligations; they are against Christ's prayer for unity, against the seals of the covenant, against our mutual promises, and against all that is dear to us. What pathetic language doth Paul employ to promote union, Phil. ii. 1, 2, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercy, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind:" words that might charm the most boisterous spirits into concord and unity. Alas, alas, alas, that a legion of devils should agree in one man, and not half so many Christians agree in one society! Why should we grieve the Spirit, unchurch ourselves, provoke God to remove the candlestick from us? how contrary is this to the spirit of the primitive Christians! Acts ii, 42, 46; and their unity was a means of their augmentation, the "Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," ver. 47. But dissensions much discourage such as are coming in; they say, we will be no part of that company who cannot agree amongst themselves. It is true, Paul and Barnabas may be in such a paroxym about a small circumstance, that they may part at present; however the fit goes off, and they are reconciled. But it is observed of some professing Christians, that if differences arise, they will

never be friends again, "The sun goes hundreds of times down upon their wrath,"* and they will hearken to no terms of accommodation. Alas! how unlike is this to a christian spirit! Drunkards will fall out and squabble, but in the morning they are friends and shake hands. How unlike to that wisdom which is from above; that is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated," James iii. 17. O that God would pour down a spirit of love, mildness, and forgiveness among us! But I shall say no more of this, except repeating the apostle's caution, Gal. v. 15, "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

5. Serviceableness of God's people on earth to one another is a grand christian duty; as believers must not hurt, so they must help each other heavenwards. Members of the body should have the "same care one for another;"† this is God's great design in giving a variety of gifts for profit and mutual edification; for there is variety of duty incumbent upon Christians. Sometimes they must warn the unruly who are in danger of falling into sin; then comfort the feeble-minded, wounded with the sense of guilt; they should support the weak, who are staggering, ready to fall,‡ instruct the ignorant, resolve the doubting, settle the wavering, rouse the slothful and indifferent, by provoking them to love and to good works,‖ and by exciting one another to prayer, to attendance on public ordinances, and to a personal covenanting with God. Oh what need to strengthen "one another, to lift up the hands that hang down, to confirm the feeble knees,"§ and to answer objections and cases of conscience. Christians have enough to do if they look

* Eph. iv. 26. † 1 Cor. xii. 25. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 14.
‖ Heb. x. 24. § Zech. viii. 21. Isa. ii. 3. Jer. l. 4, 5. Heb. xii. 12.

about them, and duly consider one another; they certainly need abundance of knowledge, grace, and tender compassion,* that they may be able to admonish one another; what need to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; not judging or despising one another in smaller matters, but seeking to please our neighbours, for their good to edification; not "putting a stumbling-block before the weak,"† &c. These are duties of great importance and require great diligence and discretion; this will be a means to exercise our own, and draw out the gifts and graces of others; and by this means others' gifts will become ours. The contrary omission is a sad symptom of apostacy or tendency thereto; and this mutual communion is proposed as a remedy against such a declining, Heb. x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." No man must say as Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" No, God expects we should watch over one another for mutual advantage. What if any be missing in the last day through our neglect? O Christians, let us delight in the society of those here on earth, with whom we hope to have communion in heaven. David accounts the saints on earth, "Excellent ones, in whom was all his delight;" and, "Let the righteous smite me," saith he, "it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for faithful are the wounds of a friend."‡ O what a mercy if we could by divine assistance, help one another towards heaven!

6. It is a great comfort to surviving relations, to hope upon good grounds, that their departed friends

* Rom. xv. 14. † Gal. vi. 2. Rom. xiv. 13. xv. 2. 1 Cor. viii. 9.
‡ Psalm xvi. 3. cxli. 5. Prov. xxvii. 6.

are among the spirits of just men made perfect. O what a comfort it is to think, my pious father, my zealous mother, and predecessors are ascended into paradise, and are now beholding the unveiled face of God in the beatifical vision; we remember their tears, groans, and complaints because of the body of death, and distance from God; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes, and sin from their souls; they shall sorrow no more at all; they have taken up their abode in the celestial mansions, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, and prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors; these died in faith, are perfect in love, and are as happy as their souls are capable of being at present; "waiting for the final consummation of their felicity in soul and body, at the general resurrection, "When the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and they that are found alive shall be changed, and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words."* There is comfort at present, to think that part of ourselves is glorified; my affectionate wife, my sweet children, have got the start of me, and have commenced, in that famous university, distinguished scholars in the profoundest gospel mysteries; saints in the highest attainments of grace and sanctity, and complete graduates in happiness, and everlasting felicity. O blessed state! their joy is my comfort; their holiness enlargeth my heart in gratitude, that there is such a state, and my best friends are got thither, though I be grovelling below, in this valley of Achor. O that I could discourse one hour with my

* 1 Thess. iv. 16—18. 1 Cor. xv. 51.

companion on that celestial state above! His body sleeps in Jesus, his soul converseth with Jesus; the sting of death is gone, and the crown of glory is placed on his triumphant head; his body rests in hope,* his spirit hath attained the end of his hope; why should I complain that I want my dear friend, when in some sense I have him, and am come to him in association and communion? I need not want him if I had but a heart to improve my connection with him. O that my heart were elevated above this narrow polluted world, to that blessed state! I will study my duty, meditate on the felicity of departed friends, and hie after them, rather than spend my days in lamentation for my loss; let God be glorified, souls saved, and I am satisfied.

7. It is a high preferment, to be advanced by death, amongst the spirits of just men made perfect. Souls are like angels, whether men or women gracious spirits here shall be equally glorified. The essential happiness of the departed, is to be ever with the Lord; an additional happiness is to be with the blessed spirits above.

O what a meeting will that be of the pious husband and wife, that prayed and wept together here, and now shall be with each other, and both with their dear Lord for ever.

The pastor shall own his child in Christ; "which shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing."† The convert shall own the instrument of his conversion, and say, This. O this is my spiritual father in Christ! At such a time, in such a place, by such a sermon, God touched my conscience and sent me home with a bleeding heart, by the same means he satisfied my soul of my interest in Christ; and by the same ordinance built

* Psalm xvi. 9. † 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

me up in holiness; and now he that sowed and we that reap rejoice together.† O blessed day, that ever I saw that man's face or heard his voice!

The father will say of his poor depraved or prodigal child, whom the Lord hath restored, I should never have had so many errands to the throne of grace, had it not been for that sad trial; that was a costly child, for I had never gone so frequently and fervently to to God in prayer, had not that untoward youth sent me with a mournful heart and many a briny tear; but God heard me, and it was as life from the dead. I acknowledge such a child as a Samuel; and such a signal mercy shall occasion joy and hallelujahs to all eternity.

The gracious child will look with joy on his pious parents, and bless God for a religious education, for prayers, example, instruction and admonition, which God blessed to his soul's good. O what a mercy! he will say, that I enjoyed such pious parents, who were always dear to me, but never so much so as now.

Thus it will be amongst christian friends that have conversed, and wept, and prayed, and enjoyed the seals of the covenant together. What a soul-reviving meeting will they have in glory!

You will say perhaps, how are you certain that the saints will know one another in heaven? I answer, we are not certain; but it is probable, because they shall enjoy that which will most contribute to their comfort, and doubtless this mutual knowledge and review of their former intercourse would very much. Luther, on the evening before he died affirmed it, saying, that Adam knew Eve to be part of himself; and the disciples knew Moses and Elias with Jesus in the mount of transfiguration, &c. Not that they will have such a knowledge of each other as they had in the

* John iv. 36.

flesh, for it will be refined from all the dregs of sense, and become like that of angels.

Divines dispute profoundly about the manner of spirits discoursing or notifying their minds to each other. I doubt not the thing; but we, being so ignorant of the nature and operations of spirits, are not able exactly to conceive of it or describe it. O, what an accession will it be to the saints' happiness, that they shall meet with such as they have known here, and celebrated saints whom they never saw in this world, to communicate experiences, solely to the glory of their supreme Lord, to whom alone the rent of glory is due. O happy meeting never to part any more! there will be no schisms, sinful passions, censures, reflections, unkind withdrawings; but all the saints there shall be one society, united together in perfect harmony, fully illuminated with the crystal beams of the sun of righteousness, and bathing their naked souls in the refreshing streams of life and love. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. O blessed day! when there shall be no more quarrels, nor jarrings; and when all those devout friends to whom our hearts were knit in the Lord, who departed before us in the faith of Christ, whom we thought we had lost, and bewailed as Jacob did Joseph, shall meet together with more joy than Jacob met his son. O what embraces, uniting of spirits and mutual interchanges of celestial favours will there be! what reciprocal affection will there be! Nor is it any diminution of Christ's honour that he there maketh use of our fellow creatures to complete our joy. The sun shineth upon the stars as well as on the earth, and the stars on one another. The whole creation, saith a great divine, will be still one compact frame, and the heavenly society will for ever retain their relation to

one another, and their aptitude and disposition to the duties and benefit of their relations.

O when shall my soul leave this tempestuous sea, and enter that haven of rest? How long shall I dwell in Meshech? how long must I be travelling in this uneven road? when shall I come to the mount of God? If it were not for the rare and delightful visits I have from God, this world would be a hell. Did not my soul enjoy some sweetness in the communion of saints, it would be a howling wilderness: but what is this pleasure to that above, where these souls shall be purified from all the dregs of ignorance, error, and partiality, and sublimated to the highest degree of which a creature is capable? How gloriously will God shine in the glory of the blessed! How delightful will it be to see their perfection in wisdom, holiness, love, and concord! There will be no jarring or discordant spirit out of tune. If I go from affectionate friends on earth, I shall go to such as will love me incomparably better; and I shall love them better, because both shall be better, and more lovely, and love more perfectly. It costs some pains here to raise my thoughts to heavenly objects; but when I shall be above, it will be natural to delight in God and in his saints: contemplation will lead to full communion. O what a blessed harmony of minds, wills, and exercises! There is nothing except confusion in this lower world, but perfect order will be above. Let death come and deliver this weary spirit, pressed down with guilt and corruption, from all the evils of this sinful life, and raise me up among the spirits of just men made perfect.

I shall on this occasion conclude with a passage taken out of Mr. Baxter's Dying thoughts, page 198, which doth somewhat illustrate my proposition, concerning the communion of saints below and the spirits

of just men above made perfect, which may seem somewhat strange: "It is at least," saith he, "very probable, that God maketh glorified spirits his agents and ministers of much of his beneficence to the creatures that are below them. For,

"First, We see, that where he has endued any creatures with noble endowments, he maketh use of them to the benefit of others. We shall in heaven be most furnished to do good, and that furniture will not be unused.

"Secondly, Christ tells us that we shall be like or equal to the angels; which though it mean not simply and in all things, yet it meaneth more than to be above carnal generation; for it speaketh of a similtude of nature and state as the reason of the other; and, also, that the angels are God's ministers for the good of the chosen in this world, and administrators of much of the affairs of the earth, is past all doubt.

"Thirdly, The apostle tells us, that the *saints shall judge the world, and angels*, and judging in Scripture is oft put for ruling. It is therefore probable, at least, that the devils and the damned shall be put under the saints; and that with the angels they shall be employed in some ministerial oversight of the inhabitants and affairs of the promised new earth.

"Fourthly, And when even the more noble and superior bodies, even the stars are of so great use and influx to inferior bodies, it is probable that accordingly superior spirits will be of use to the inhabitants of the world below them. The truth of this notion I neither affirm nor deny, but leave it to the consideration of the learned; as it is propounded only as a conjecture. Yet this doth no ways countenance the popish adoration of saints and angels, from which the beloved disciple was prohibited, Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 8, 9."

LETTER

TO THE

REV. THOMAS JOLLIE,

Prefixed to this Volume

AS THE FAC-SIMILE OF AN AUTOGRAPH IN THE POSSESSION OF THE REV. T. RAFFLES, LL.D.

Reverend and dear } Brother, June 12, 1700.

Your letter by your maid I received yesterday, am glad to hear from you, but sorry for your bodily infirmitys, and desire to sympathize with you, god will gradually wean us from and weary us out of the world that heaven may be more welcom, that rod which drives, or that love which draws us, to god, makes us meet for heaven. I am heartily sorry for that unhappy fraction amongst our friends in Craven, a sad comment upon the 3d of James—*tantœne animis cœlestibus iræ !* that, with the like in some other places, bodes ill to the nation, and our liberty and if my ink, or breath, or blood would afford a plaistre, I should rejoyce, for they have been, and are dear to me, but what can man doe? I am very jealous that Mr. K hath missd it various ways, and he must either seriously repent, and solemnly declare in a publick professed way, or he cannot expect that either god or man will be reconciled to him: Sin will bring shame, and shaming ourselves is the best fruit of it. I purpose (if the Lord will) to write home to him, to which I have some peculiar obligations: I am glad you have so far concern'd yourself in this affair, and have been faithfull to him and them, and that he shews any relentings, but thats not enough; them that sin, rebuke before all, 1 Tim. 5. 20: especially preachers: and I think a time of probation of the truth of Repentance may be fit: I am troubled for his prejudices agt you, and silence to your lettres: I am far from palliating, extenuating, or excusing any ones faults, *nugæ in laicis nugæ sunt, in clericis Blasphemiæ;* yet its frequently observed that when men begin to draw up Articles they oft run far back, make worst constructions of tollerable actions, aggravate things to the height; new prejudices are raised, fomented,

severall will bring storys out of ill intents, and desire to perpetuate dissentions: I wish there had been more caution and moderation used by our Christian brethren, had they advised with some of us at first before matters came to this head and height who knows but much scandall had been prevented? and yet for all this if both sides would lay aside bitterness, and quietly state their case, methinks something might be done by the ministers of Christ at a distance, for I must confesse I am not capable of reaching them or conversing personally with them; nor is it fit for them to come, but some proposals of generall termes of accommodation subscribed by 3 or 4 of us, and presented to them, might make an experiment, how far that may goe before there be a totall rupture, for I should be sorry Dr. Stillingfleet should be a true prophet 20 years; let the dissentres alone and they will destroy themselves: gods way hath its authority as much as their Apocalypticall courts: you that live nearer may have fairer opportunity to help them, and the deference they have for your person, gifts, gravity, age and graces, is as likely to put an end to the matter as any I know; and I shall contribute the best assistance that lyes within my power, if you or they shall signify what procedure is made therein, and methinks there seemes some necessity of their reuniting, upon severall considerations, but I cannot inlarge, however I must make it matter of my poor prayers, that the god of all grace would humble and soften their hearts, that they may walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy ghost may be edifyed.—Dear Brother, we have not many steps to our father's house; where our soules shall unanimously sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, with our godly friends and brethren, now

at rest, where he longs to be who is
your endeared anciently obliged
brother, OL. HEYWOOD.

Accept this little treatise as a viand.

END OF VOL. IV.

J. Vint, Printer, Southgate, Idle.

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01195 3421

DATE DUE

FEB 24 1978

DEC 12 1998

DEC 28 1998

JUN 30 2008

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.